

小野崎えいじ

ILLUSTRATION

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BOUNDARY
LABYRINTH
AND MAGICIAN OF
ALIEN WORLD

境界迷宮 異界の魔術師

VOLUME

2

OVERLAP

Illustrations





→ Boundary Labyrinth and Magician of Alien World

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Kyoukai Meikyuu to Ikai no Majutsushi [WN]

Part 2

by Phage321

Info: [Novel Updates](#)

Chapter 41 – At Theorem Palace

The banquet this year was supposedly a formal event, but according to the information Sheila had gathered, it was more of a normal event where one could enjoy pleasant conversations over dinner. We would also watch the Knights display the fruits of their standard training in a courtyard as a public demonstration, which was rather different from a typical event.

The Knights of the Weldogal Kingdom who persisted to the end would have their training results announced to the Royal Family. This was for the sake of displaying the superiority and bravery of the Kingdom Knights.

I felt like them honoring the soldiers that died on duty this year added an implication of renewing the oath to protect the Kingdom's peace.

When attending such a banquet, it was customary for the invited guests to bring their fiance or spouse. Nobles used banquets, dances, and the like, to search for arranged marriage partners, and they decided whether or not to chat with someone after seeing if they had a fiance.

With that, I headed to Theorem Palace together with Grace and Ashley.

Grace wasn't in her usual pinafore, but was actually wearing a formal evening dress.

The dress was black, with a vivid blue pattern, and I thought that it suited her well, even though the colors were similar to those of her maid outfit.

This was apparently made for her when she was at the Gartner residence, for special occasions like banquets or evening parties.

As for Ashley, her dress was an almost lavender light purple bolero with a white base. The frills and ribbons were the same color. Although it was a calm, cute design, it was elegant and suited Ashley well.

...Well, if you put the two of them together, they were a sight to behold.

As for my outfit, it was my usual coat, which was provided to me. It qualified as formal clothing, and I had given up on trying to look better, since this appearance was good enough for the public.

Compared to these two exceedingly beautiful women,

rather than calling it mediocre, my appearance was average. Regardless, it was questionable as to whether or not I fit in next to these two.

Well...Even if I said that, it couldn't be helped, since nothing had even started yet.

At best, I didn't want to be exposed, and would rather be seen as an escort.

These two were each wearing a flower in their hair that matched their hair color as well. The flowers apparently meant that they didn't want to be courted by someone else, since they were already my chosen partners. The man who was escorting them would automatically be considered to be their partner. The two of them probably chose to wear that flower beforehand.

“Shall we go then? Your hands.”

“Yes.”

“Fufu.”

As evening neared, the streets in Termuilles were dyed red. I would escort the two of them in a carriage sent by Theorem

Palace.

“Well then, take care.”

“Yeah, we’ll be off now.”

After I waved at Sheila, who had come to see us off, the carriage departed.

“I know there is a reason behind this...but having Theo escorting us like this...somehow makes me happy.”

“That’s right. Going out like this with Theodore-sama sure makes it exciting.”

Somehow, the two of them seemed to be enjoying this. If something like this made them happy, then perhaps it would be better to create more situations like this. Not just evening parties, but also going out to plays and such.

...That’s right. Termuilles was really close to the sea; shall we try heading there next time?

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After crossing a drawbridge, the carriage proceeded towards a huge, magnificent building made of stone, the Theorem Palace.

If I were to describe it briefly, then I would point out the building's structure, which was located within the castle walls. The building within the remarkably large center was the Tower of the King, which housed the Royal Family.

The social event this time was being held in the reception hall adjacent to the Tower of the Knights and the Drill Grounds. It seems the building wasn't created by the Labyrinth, but was added by the Knights later on to be used for various matters.

The Drill Grounds, which had a wide, clear space, was illuminated with Magic and bonfires. This was probably where the martial arts demonstration would be held, since I saw Knights on standby, lined up with their horses and dragons.

Part of the first floor of the building had turned into a Terrace Cafe, which was connected to the Dance Hall and was lined with tables.

I guess this place was created under the premise of holding this kind of event.

Although finely dressed guests had already gathered, after

handing in my invitation, I was led to a seat on the second floor balcony.

...VIP treatment, huh? Hmm.

I didn't really understand the Knights' intentions. Were they picking a fight with me, or did they hold me in high regard instead?

“Ooh, it's Theodore?”

The person that greeted me with a smile was the vice-president of the Adventurer's Guild, Holy Sword Oswald.

This was a martial arts event hosted by the Knights, after all. He wasn't invited, he was personally selected.

“Hello. It's a pleasant evening, isn't it?.”

“Yeah. There are open seats there. I wonder if you're fine sitting next to this old man.”

“To view this display of martial arts with Oswald-sama is quite interesting, don't you think?”

I sat down at the table next to him in the spot I was

offered.

“As for me, it would be more interesting for you to display your skills. I didn’t get to see your aerial battle nor Staff handling because I took too much time evacuating and guarding people.”

“Unfortunately, for today, I have the role of being an escort.”

He even tried to size me up. I didn’t look like someone who would wave his Staff around and cause a racket. After I answered him with my arms spread open, Oswald looked at Grace’s and Ashley’s hair accessory and nodded with a ‘Hmm.’

I couldn’t tell if he had understood something, but I shouldn’t ask about it too much.

After we introduced each other, I asked Oswald a question.

“Does Oswald-sama receive an invitation every year?”

“Just this once. The ones who have appeared here have all

not done much, so there aren't any interesting guys."

"Is that so?"

"The Leader of the Knights this time is quite something, though. It appears he lost so much face that he can't even brandish his sword."

Oswald shrugged his shoulders while looking towards the Drilling Grounds.

"Do you know of a young Knight named Chester?"

"That Flying Dragon Rider, huh? Amongst the Knights, I think he's the only one who isn't here right now."

Dragon Knight Chester. Although Knights were Knights, it appeared he was a Knight who rode Dragons.

According to Sheila's investigations, he was accomplished in both literary and martial arts, and his reputation was flawless.

Sheila said it was very suspicious, but that was just a normal opinion. He wasn't related to very suspicious figures,

even if he did something suspicious one time.

Although I thought that him having that suspicious behavior was probably a rumor, I didn't really know why he would do such a thing.

“Chester-sama, I wish you good luck in today’s practice.”

“Please be careful to not get any injuries.”

“Haha. It’ll be fine. I have an excellent Healing Magician on standby, and my weapon is in its Habaki. Something would rarely occur.”

(TN: Habaki = a metal collar used to prevent a sword from falling out)

Just as you would have thought, I heard such a voice. A figure that appeared to be Chester was in one of the balcony seats, wearing a ceremonial outfit. He was accompanied by several noble girls and was gathering attention from the surroundings.

Well...it was said that he was the most successful out of the Knights. I really felt like he was picture-perfect.

Chester put on a smile, and after standing there while giving his greetings to the surrounding girls, directly

approached Oswald.

“So, Oswald-sama is here. I’m so glad you could make it. Our plans have been delayed a bit. I’ll give notice and apologize as soon as I give my greetings.”

“Is that so? I’m expecting good things from you at the display today.”

“I shall live up to your expectations and work hard.”

With that, he gave a bow to Oswald.

“And Theodore-kun, I’m glad you could make it today.”

“Yeah, Lord Chester.”

“Please enjoy the display of our martial arts.”

“Allow me to have a look at it.”

His attitude was the same as before.

“It’s also a pleasure to meet these beautiful ladies. I call myself Chester.”

Although Chester greeted Grace and Ashley, Grace looked at him coldly for a moment and finished with a nod. The same went for Ashley. He did not even give a hint of a friendly smile and ended it with a light bow.

...Well, this was likely the case. Those two had heard and knew about his behaviour at the Guild, as well as Sheila’s information. Even if it was too late for him to be friendly with us, the more perfect he was, the more likely he would appear to be suspicious, rather than deserving our trust.

Besides, I had my own opinions, so even if it was a mere formality, it looked like we gave our greetings. Rather than looked, it was more that we actually gave them. Whether or not this was the reaction he was expecting, Chester’s expression stiffened for a moment as he smiled.

“This is quite difficult, you are making me shy. Well then, I’ll be going around to give my greetings to other people, so if you would excuse me.”

He immediately recovered and left.

Did he always think positively, or did he just smooth things over? Just then, there was one thing I didn't understand... no matter how you looked at it, he wasn't shy. That reaction was worthy of being nonexistent.

“He somehow reminds me of Byron.”

Grace said.

Yeah...the way he played the hypocrite in front of adults was well done, that guy.

In short, Grace's evaluation of him was abysmal.

“He's a person I don't understand well. Rather than that, the embroidery of this tablecloth...is really exquisite, you know.”

“Yeah, that's true. It uses a technique I've never seen before.”

I felt the two of them had pulled themselves together, but unfortunately they started their girls' talk.

Chapter 42 – Reunion With Albert

As expected, within the group of Knights, the ones who were friendly with Chester were the Dragon Knights who shared the same rank as him.

And, most likely, the superior within those Dragon Knights was Vice-Commander Greg. Even amongst the Knights, this man's evaluation appeared to be divided.

Speaking about it idealistically, he didn't really show superiority as a commander, but was the type of person who usually handled things with his spirit and gut. Since he talked about things boldly whenever he opened his mouth, I felt that...he was popular with the lower ranks and was hated by the nobles.

Since Chester was appointed under him and was rising up in the world, then he probably got along well with Greg.

Since that was the case, it was either Chester or Greg. Perhaps I should be careful coming into contact with nobles who had a connection with Greg.

After being lost in thought while looking at the Knights and the soldiers at the drilling ground below me, the horns sounded off.

The guests began to quiet down, and the figure of King Melvin appeared from the balcony of the Knights Tower. His age was around 50. He had the image of a stern, great man.

“Everyone, We are sorry for troubling you.”

Melvin spoke to the square in a solemn voice.

“Although this event was originally supposed to be a banquet to help people deepen their friendship, those words aren’t suitable at this hour. As everyone knows, several of Our soldiers gave up their lives for the Kingdom during the Cardiff incident and the appearance of the Demon. We considered not hosting a banquet this evening, thinking about the feelings of the wives, children, and parents who were left behind.”

(TL: Royal we.)

Melvin stopped talking for a moment, before closing his eyes and stretching out both of his arms.

“However, We received a plea from a number of people and therefore acknowledged the opening of tonight’s banquet. This banquet is held so We do not forget their loyalty and bravery to Us. It is so We do not forget the names and faces of our fellow companions. As long as there are brave men like them, the glorious Weldogal assures you that

attacks from the likes of Demons will be naught but a trifling matter. Although Our Knights have honor and glory, they have inherited it from the souls and wills of those who fell. Everyone, drink, eat, and enjoy this evening to your heart's content. This will be our farewell to the brave people who devoted their souls to the Kingdom."

Melvin lifted a cup and said this:

"To the brave soldiers!"

After saying that, he finished his cup in one gulp. Everyone present followed suit, and then cheers resounded in the square. Melvin nodded calmly, and after looking at his surroundings like he was calming down the cheering, he said:

"And then, the little Hero who confronted the Demon single-handedly and destroyed it. We think that We are happy about the fact that such a person is hidden within our Kingdom, and the fact that he braved the danger, regardless of his own interests, and fearlessly confronted it. We also asked him to come to the banquet this evening."

Melvin then looked directly towards me and laughed, showing me a large grin on his face.

His expression somehow reminded me of a mischievous child's. I knew that the invited guests had gathered their attention on me. Hmm.

...King Melvin. If I were to talk about his nature, then he would be a simple and sturdy military man. He probably realized that I got along with Oswald, but in BFO, Players had no contact with his name nor his appearance.

Due to that, it was the same as not knowing Melvin's nature. One's reputation and face didn't always match up with one's true intentions. Even the King got involved with political situations here, but that shouldn't determine whether he was trustworthy or not.

The intentions of the Knights were theirs, the intentions of the King were his, and I still didn't know if Chester understood his surroundings.

After Melvin sat down in the large chair that was prepared for him on the balcony, the musicians began to play majestic music. Although elegant music was flowing for the ordinary, simple speech, the meaning behind it was probably different.

Since the results of the daily training would be shown to

the King, the infantry and cavalry formed a line and presented the rearrangement of their formation. A command was issued, and they changed to the next formation. It didn't mean the skill of the whole army was high, but it was satisfying to see them move in perfect coordination as they were commanded.

After this, the program would surely continue on to a joust or a mounted archery competition.

What they would be doing now was a Tourney, a team jousting battle.

The armored Knights mounted their horses and dragons, faced each other, and then started charging at each other. From the looks of it, they were aiming to knock their opponents off of their mounts by jabbing them with their spears as they passed by each other... Well, it was a competition.

Their spears were made mainly of easily broken processed wood, and even though there were flat caps on the tips of the spears, which lessened its killing power, there was still the danger of being pierced by fragments of wood and falling down from their mounts, so it wasn't completely safe.

Oswald explained some of the good points to me.

Cheers sounded from the invited guests every time the

opposing Knight was knocked off from his mount by a spear.

It appeared that one team wore red-plume helmets and the other wore blue-plume helmets, splitting them into groups of five people each.

As for how a match was carried out, despite the blue team vanguard having defeated three people in a row, they were, in turn, defeated by the red team's sub-captain.

The red sub-captain let out a shrill cheer every time his opponents were knocked off their mounts.

He faced the audience and waved his hands, becoming increasingly lively.

Although I couldn't see his face because of the helmet, it appeared that person was Chester.

Oswald did say that it would be natural for the red team to win...and I felt that Chester was definitely superior to the others.

However, Oswald didn't appear to be that pleased by it. Even though cheers rose from Chester's victories, he didn't look interested in it.

“Is there a problem with Chester?”

“Rather than Chester...it’s the Knights as a whole. That guy personally finished this without looking bad, so that isn’t interesting, and even if they can’t engage in close combat with him, the Knights right now are a bunch of cowards. They know this well, which means that they are setting the stage and waiting for the second strongest guy in the blue vanguard.”

“...I see.”

So that meant that it was a half-rigged match. It was a match between members of the same organization, but I thought that the excitement from this was necessary, since this was a social event in the end.

Moreover, Oswald made quite the serious complaint.

The way Chester fought was rather normal, making him popular with the crowd, and when taking that into consideration, Oswald’s evaluation of Chester ended up being ‘He is neat and orderly, so it isn’t interesting.’

“That’s why you should go and participate in this. It will serve as a good stimulus for them, you know.”

“What nonsense is that, this guy.”

After I dodged Oswald’s joke, a woman approached us.

“Excuse me for disturbing you during your pleasant chat. Are you Theodore Gartner-sama? My name is Annie Erimson.”

“...Hello.”

“I’m a member of the Magician’s Unit. I’m here to give my greeting and talk with Theodore-sama. If you’re fine with it, will you please come with me?”

...The Magician’s Unit, huh. Didn’t they oppose the Knights? Perhaps they would ask me about some kind of important information?

Even though this place was for people to mingle with each other, if the partners who had to attend with me became a popular topic of conversation, then it would be natural to narrow down the candidates.

“That would be fine. I’ll accompany you.”

“I’ll go with you too.”

When I stood up, Grace and Ashley did the same. It appeared that the two of them intended to come together with me.

“Will you be fine watching the match?”

“No, please allow me to come.”

Ashley smiled.

“Well, I guess this event is rather boring. Especially with being your equal and fighting alongside you.”

“Hmm.”

...I had wondered about that.

As we were led by Annie, we made our way to the Knight’s Tower, which was adjacent to the Drilling Grounds.

It was strictly guarded, since it was likely to house the

Royal Family on the higher floors, but Annie didn't hesitate as we proceeded onward.

“Here it is.”

We were giving permission to enter a room.

The person who was there...was someone I already knew, and he came to greet me.

“Yo! It's a pleasure to meet you.”

In other words, it was Prince Albert putting on a friendly smile.

Today, he was accompanied by his younger sister, Princess Marleen, and his fiance, Ophelia.

Was Marleen shy around strangers? After looking at me, she hid in Prince Albert's shadow and continued to watch me timidly. Ophelia was more dignified.

“This one here is—”

Although Annie tried to introduce him, Albert interrupted her with his hand.

“That’s fine. I really hate doing formal things after all. I’m sorry for bringing you here halfway through the matches. I wanted to talk with you in private, no matter what.”

“Is that so?”

“I’m Albert, the fourth Prince of this country. This is my little sister, Marleen, and umm...my friend, Ophelia.”

Yeah, I already knew. I had expected to come into contact with him if I came to the Palace.

Prince Albert looked like he wanted to become a Magic Engineer in the future, so I understood how he could create connections with the Magician’s Unit.

I knew that he was a friendly person...Well, this was our first meeting, and as long as he was the Prince, I probably couldn’t deal with him like I did when he was Alfred.

“These are my fiancees, Ashley and Grace.”

Following the proper etiquette, they greeted him and

introduced themselves.

“Fiancees...not bad, you.”

Prince Albert looked at me in amazement.

“I’m sure the Prince also has a fiancee, right?”

Ophelia laughed with a ‘Fufufu’ as the shadow on her face darkened.

“Well...um, I’ll admit that Ophelia is my fiancee.”

Prince Albert blushed slightly and rubbed his index finger on his cheek. It appeared that he was embarrassed to introduce his fiancee.

“Well, what should I say? I had you come here since I heard about you from a friend. His name is Talcott.”

Right, he did bring up such a topic.

As for me, who knew that he was a puppet, it would be a

bit problematic if I showed a reaction to that. It appeared that he intended to hide the fact that he was Alfred.

“He told me that he wanted to express his gratitude to you.”

“Is that so? I thought that he wouldn’t want to thank me.”

“You’re free to think like that, and Talcott is free to express his gratitude. He definitely wanted to say it.”

“...Understood.”

Although he probably wanted to relay Talcott’s message to me, I didn’t think it would be to that extent.

Well then...Exactly what did Prince Albert have in mind, I wonder?

Chapter 43 – The Desire of the Prince and the Knights

“I thought you would understand, too. Relaying his words doesn’t mean he will show up.”

Albert said that with a serious look.

“Right now, our Magicians, servants, and the like are being mobilized into Decipher Groups at the castle. They are so eager to decipher old documents that they are turning the Library inside out.”

“The aftermath of the Demon incident, is it?”

I had thought about investigating the connection between the Demon and the Moon Shrine a little bit, but it was apparently becoming an important matter.

“That’s right. I’m more suited for learning in classrooms than training in Magic, so they have let me voluntarily help

with the investigation...As for the Moon Shrine, it's not a mistake for it to be sealed, since it is rather dangerous. We have also found evidence of a letter containing Dimension Stone research that was sent outside the City."

To the outside, right?

It turned out that the Demon had companions.

"Is it all right...for you to talk about such things with me?"

"Well, I'm not really talking about anything concrete, and it's not like anything will happen, even if we talk about it. You might get investigated by His Majesty and, in fact, this isn't even the main subject. However, I'd be happy if you could at least keep the things I've mentioned secret. There have also been hidden schemes to try and make you known to the public, you know."

Albert placed his index finger on his mouth and laughed.

Hmm. Was Albert...warning me? Just like he said, even though Albert was searching for talented people, it wasn't just out of the kindness of his heart.

“Then, what is the main subject?”

“It appears that a portion of the Knights oppose you. I thought about whether it was prudent to inform you about it or not.”

‘I guess it’s better to realize it now, since it has been said by the Prince too.’

“Eh? You knew about it? Then, was this assistance unnecessary?”

“Not at all.”

Having Sheila sneak into the Palace was impossible. The risk was too high. Rather, let’s stop there.

I only knew a portion of their background, which had been brought to light, mainly the name of the group’s leader and their connections. Even if I were to guess about various things, one needed such information to talk about it.

“Will the situation change to where the Knights are cornered?”

“The Knights and Soldiers have talked about forming search groups to descend into the Labyrinth. Even the Kingdom wants clues on how to invade the currently sealed Moon Shrine. Our Soldiers and Knights want to reverse their bad reputation, since they couldn’t show off their ability during the recent Demon incident.”

“I see...”

The Knights were going into the Labyrinth, huh? Was that why the promising Chester, who was under Greg, was getting involved with me?

Perhaps they had thought of me as a rival in the same trade since I had defeated the Demon and descended the Labyrinth?

If Chester’s reputation lived up to his surroundings, then perhaps his usual behavior was intentional.

For example, his goal would be to inspire hostility towards me, using my own trust as a weapon. If I spoke ill of Chester because of this, I’d think the people around us would trap Chester with slander.

If I considered the fact that Greg was popular with those below him and was hated by those above him, I'd think Chester was the same. There was a possibility of the people below him looking down on me if that appeared regularly. If the Knights were to look at me, then I'd be a person more aligned towards the Magician's Unit.

However, the problem was why they were inspiring hostility towards me. It probably wasn't clear with that alone. What exactly were they expecting by showing me that kind of behavior?

“Well, I think the people who belong to the Dragon Knights have something to be ashamed of.”

“Huh, why?”

“The flying dragons don't have a turn to go into the Labyrinth, you know.”

Oh, was that it? I understood the reason.

“In regards to my method of Flight, has it been talked about at the Palace?”

“Umm, that is...Oh, was it like that?”

As expected, Prince Albert was quick to understand. It seemed he guessed what I wanted to say with that alone.

When considering that we were the only ones who could oppose the Demons that could fly in the air, and that I could battle in midair, if the Magician’s Unit ended up being able to do the same thing, they would become unrivaled in the air. At the very least, the disadvantage of being picked off by the Demons in the sky, one by one, would disappear from the Magician’s Unit.

After that...there was the possibility that I would personally be employed by the Palace.

The reason was easy to understand. In short, it would jeopardize their vested interest.

I didn’t really have...such a reason for defeating the Demon, though.

I didn’t think he would understand, even if I explained it, and it didn’t mean that the situation would change even if he understood, so there was no point in trying.

“About your method of Flight, there have been requests for information disclosure. However, it was labeled as a secret skill and they were rejected by His Majesty, so that it wouldn’t leak out and make an enemy of competent personnel.”

By Melvin, huh?

“Control ability and experience is essential for that, so all of the disclosed information is nothing other than what was seen.”

“Haha, it seems like that’s the case. That’s why I feel that I...understand your logic. The Magicians who aren’t involved with the old documents are struggling greatly with the combined use of Levitation and Shield, as well as managing it with or without Chants. They’ve given up hope for using this in battle because of that.”

It was wasteful to pay for this information, since it was easy to understand and had a relatively high priority, so it looked like they were taking care of this responsibility by themselves. I wonder when Magicians who can carry out aerial battles will start to appear.

“Hmm, I don’t think there are any Magicians, at all, who could do it, though?”

“Old man Rickard was able to do it. It was awful and he ended up throwing up because he couldn’t get used to the three-dimensional movements, though.”

Albert shrugged.

...Is that so.

“By the way...Is there something Your Highness wishes of me for the price of this information?”

“I thought the information I’ve given to you wasn’t really that meaningful though.”

“No, it was very useful, so I thought that I should give you something in return, since I understand that you’re trying to become allies with me.”

“...Well, getting acquainted with you was a sufficient reward...That’s right. I have a friend by my side named Alfred, who wishes to become a Magic Engineer.”

...Huh?

“I think he could create various interesting items if we have your Magic Control ability. If you’re alright with it, I want you to help out on various things, if he makes an appearance.”

“...Understood. I’ll give you my word.”

I, who knew that he led a double life, put on a smile that made me look like a bad person.

However, I knew where he was coming from. Should I head there? Personally, I thought it would be better if he were more straightforward. I knew what Albert’s true desire was, and what he was aiming for.

I took a stealthy glance at Marleen and Ophelia. Those two were laughing without worries as they chatted pleasantly with Grace and Ashley.

...Well, that’s fine, I guess? I was still next to Albert, so maybe they didn’t trust me yet.

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After saying my thanks to Albert, we left and had returned to the second floor terrace of the reception hall when Chester showed up.

“Theodore-kun, huh? The individual match from earlier ended in a splendid victory. I’ve gone around and greeted our honored guests.”

He said with a smile on his face.

“Is that so?”

Well, I completely hated anything troublesome, so I decided to make it clear to him about where I stood. Should I try speaking with Chester and throwing him a straight ball?

“Umm, I want to talk about something with Lord Chester directly, so I wonder if you could spare a bit of time?”

When I said that, Chester opened his eyes widely and stared at me.

After that, the edges of his mouth rose significantly.

“With me? Fine. I’ve finished giving my round of greetings. Right now, they’re doing land dragon races, and it won’t be my turn for a while. I thought about talking with the Demon Killer Hero-kun without any hindrances.”

“Do you have an available room somewhere?”

“There’s an underground training area beneath the Knight’s Tower for when it rains. How about going there?”

Chapter 44 – At the Underground Training Grounds

I faced Chester at the Underground Training Grounds beneath the Knight's Tower.

I confronted him with the main subject, ignoring introductions.

“I’ve heard rumors.”

“What kind of rumors?”

“That the Dragon Knights are feeling insecure because of the future development of Flight techniques. Lord Chester doesn’t have to worry, but do you have anything you want to tell me about this? Could it possibly be Lord Greg’s plan?”

After I said that, Chester frowned slightly. It was only for an instant, and then he immediately put on a smile to fix his expression.

“Let’s see, what was it?”

“At any rate, there isn’t anyone else around, and I understand that Lord Chester doesn’t have a good impression of me. I would prefer it if you could share your true intentions with me.”

“My true intentions, is it?”

After Chester closed his eyes, he shrugged.

“Very well. It’s true that I don’t like you. A filthy Magician is trying to venture into our territory, as if he owned the place. His Majesty is also interested in you. Commander-dono also appears to believe that the banquet wouldn’t have been held if you weren’t summoned. He’s taken a fancy to you, I think?”

I had heard that the Magicians and the Knights weren’t on good terms with each other. I didn’t know the details, though.

“Why go as far as hating the Magicians?”

“Why? I’ve heard about how you battle. When that Demon was your opponent, you first launched a surprise attack with a large spell. The movements you made afterwards were basically another surprise attack that made it unable to fly around. It’s always like this with Magicians. You don’t fight the way an honorable person fights. Please change that, before it’s too late.”

“...Are you saying that seriously?”

“Of course. It’s fine if you don’t leave the Adventurer’s Guild or the Labyrinth. However, I don’t like people like you getting involved with our glorious Kingdom. It’s not just me; Lord Greg has the same opinion.”

...Perhaps he was a guy on the path to Knighthood? I did realize that the Knights didn’t have anything like Demons as an opponent.

Their methods of provocation were lukewarm at best, and even if Greg had something on his mind, it was probably because of his personality. In short, Chester seemed to be taking what we were talking about right now into serious consideration, considering his position.

“If you ended up fighting a Demon with those thoughts, you’ll die, you know?”

“Hou, thanks for saying that. Unfortunately, I’ve never fought with a Demon before.”

“...I had no intention of saying that as a joke, nor am I being foolish.”

“I’m just saying that it’s better to make Demons surrender head on. The Dragon Knights won’t have a problem with the miasma and things like that if they get protection.”

Those who were strong and came from the Labyrinth were regarded as important, but there were no long, wide-scale wars in the Kingdom.

Regardless of the Labyrinth, it probably couldn’t be helped that the Knights’ way of thinking had developed towards valuing honor, considering they bore the responsibility of guarding the Palace and the Capital.

The Knights under direct command of the Palace probably thought of themselves as Elites...so it made sense that putting them with Magicians was like mixing water and oil.

The Knights failed to notice the kidnapping incident and

the Demon's intrusion, and certainly they had made a mistake by not making it to the Demon's subjugation in time. After being left out of resolving the situation, they were probably outraged.

There were definitely ways to counter the miasma.

If it were the Knights, then it was probably possible to receive that support.

I was sure the Dragon Knights would compensate this disadvantage with aerial battles.

"Then, if you aren't bluffing, would you give me some advice on this?"

Chester said, with an irritated tone. If he could overpower me, who exchanged blows with Lynette using Skills, in close combat techniques, then it would be easy for him to destroy a Demon head on...was probably what he was getting at.

"I don't mind at all, you know. It's quicker to prove and show it by using our Skills, right? I'll accompany you for a bit in a mock battle, if we're done talking."

"Right now, with that appearance? You probably don't

have a weapon.”

...So?

He was probably misunderstanding something. There were practice spears with no spearheads leaning against the walls of the Underground Training Grounds.

The spears were made of iron that stretched until their handles. In this mock battle...as long as it wasn't a Magic battle, this would be enough to be a substitute for a Staff. After putting a suitable practice spear in my hands, I said:

“And do you think a Demon would respect the state of one's equipment and weapons?”

“...Interesting. Will you swear to stay out of Palace affairs if I win?”

Perhaps this included our talk about Flight techniques. For the time being, it was unlikely that anyone who could rival the Dragon Knights would appear any time soon...and if I were to get involved in promoting myself here personally, I didn't know what would happen.

“That's fine. I didn't originally plan on quitting my job as

an Adventurer at this point in time anyway. It will help me if you don't get involved in my various matters if I win."

"Very well."

//

Chester also picked up a practice spear, and then we faced each other. Chester was indeed a Dragon Knight. He knew how to use a long-handled weapon even if the battle was on the ground.

Well, Chester appeared to hate weaknesses that were caused by Magic, and I thought that his skill would be acceptable if he could do something about a Demon's Flight and their Miasma.

"I'll start then?"

"Come."

The instant I obtained his consent, I kicked the floor of the Training Grounds and closed the distance in one breath. Although the wide-eyed Chester tried to counter it, his

reaction was slow. I propped the spear's handle onto my knee to use it as a shield, in order to strike him with my body while deflecting his attack, and then I rammed him. Even if I didn't infuse Mana into the spear and handled it roughly for a bit, it probably wouldn't break.

“W-What!?”

Chester, who received this attack, stumbled and stared at me, wide-eyed. His reaction told me that he had not thought that he would retreat a step just from being pressured by a child.

What I showed just now was a warm up. This was a mock battle so I couldn't use spells with high killing power, and I couldn't infuse my weapon with Mana either. Therefore, I decided to strengthen my body with Circulation, performing the fundamentals of my battle skills.

Immediately after that, I grabbed the middle of my spear and stepped forward, unleashing an attack from both sides, like I was swinging an oar. Sounds of metal clashed as our iron spears struck each other. The current distance was the range I excelled in. Although we both had the same weapon equipped, the way I used it was different from the beginning. I engulfed Chester's thrust and drove him away. Our positions rapidly changed places, as if we were dancing a

rondo.

Just as he got used to seeing the attacks from the side, I unexpectedly changed the trajectory, swinging downwards. I transitioned into a strike, as if I were going to scoop him up.

“Ku!”

Although it didn’t finish him off and he blocked it with the back of his hand, Chester’s spear was left in his left hand, and he made a wide swing. I jumped backwards and avoided that strike.

“I won’t think of you as a brat any longer!”

Chester, who distanced himself from me, brandished his spear in a cowboy stance, and then his body and spear were enveloped in a blue aura.

It was a martial arts skill, Meteor Thrust. Chester fiercely charged at me with his whole body while thrusting his spear.

“Naive.”

If I stuck to him and only defended, perhaps he would get

impatient and give me the victory.

Although his Meteor Thrust certainly was fast, I had the theory that such a bold move would make their user lose their balance. Otherwise, they would suffer a severe blow.

Use a martial skill to deal with a martial skill. The Joujutsu skill, Sweeping Haze(霞払い).

The moment the tips of our spears touched each other, I changed the direction of his power. The sensation of his Aura and my Mana mixing was similar to that of riding on a rail and sliding on it. We switched stances at the same time and faced each other.

“What!?”

Chester’s body changed direction, and he ended up striking the wall of the Training Grounds.

“Guh!”

He nearly withstood it before he struck the wall. I approached him without any difficulties, and then I slashed at Chester’s chest with the spear.

Although he blocked my spear at the last moment, he lost his balance. His body immediately bent over. While facing

his side, I unleashed an attack and beat him down.

Chester received blows with condensed power in the form of a spiral, and he was blown towards the direction I wanted him to go. I pulled my spear away for a moment and gave him a low kick, and as he fell down, I thrusted my spear at his neck.

“_”

Just as I was about to stab his throat with the tip of my spear, I asked him:

“Do you admit your loss?”

“...Yeah.”

Chester nodded, looking frustrated.

“The only times I was dealt with this nicely was when I was receiving lessons...from Commander and Oswald-dono long ago.”

That was right. To explain it more clearly, our experience

differed.

Even if I said that my training was enhanced through BFO's PvP system, it had accumulated through a massive amount of trial and error.

Training normally couldn't take you this far, and people fought above their limits. This was done every day and night, until one was satisfied. It was like asking what kind of skills one should attack with, where to attack, how to deal with a situation, what the enemy's next move would be, and what the best card they had right now was.

Martial skills, Magic, and Items as well. I had learned to finish any kind of battle, and I took great pains in learning how to see cheesy and checkmate situations, and how to counterattack them.

I had such a massive amount of experience and knowledge that, as long as my body kept up with this information with Circulation, I had no reason to lose easily.

"I certainly lost. However, I don't think I am wrong. If you can go so far without using magic...isn't playing petty tricks unnecessary with Demons as an opponent? If it's you, that is."

Thinking in such a way was an overestimation. The power

of my Magic was displayed through close combat, and miasma bullets weren't something that a physical body could endure. You would definitely die if you were devoured, so it was necessary to approach them while preventing that situation.

“...I think it's splendid for Lord Chester to attain Knighthood. However, I have my own way of fighting and my own opinions on how to face battles. I would like the freedom to fight as I choose.”

“...Those are?”

“I want to fight in a way where I can manipulate how my opponents move. Reading their position and thoughts, and then crushing them, is the way I really battle. That's why, even if battles are like these matches or mock battles, I have no intention of changing the way I fight, regardless of winning against opponents with one's true ability or being inferior to them. Especially when Demons are my opponents. Those things are even more disgusting.”

“What have the Demons...done to you?”

After seeing my expression, Chester raised his eyebrows, as if he had also remembered something.

“...Well, that was a good discussion. There aren’t any challengers, so I believe that you can keep a promise.”

Leaving the question unanswered, I glanced at the dumbfounded Chester out of the corner of my eye, and then left the Underground Training Grounds.

Chapter 45 – Audience with King Melvin

“I’m back.”

“Welcome back.”

“Did you finish your conversation?”

After I returned to the second floor balcony of the reception hall, the two girls welcomed me back with smiles.

“Yeah, I’m not really interested in staying at the Palace anymore, and we agreed to not interfere with each other.”

In reality, regardless of whether I won or lost on that agreement, I had already had such feelings.

“By the way, what are they doing now?”

When I looked down at the square, an armful of steles

standing tall were being carried in from somewhere. There was one armored Knight keeping a short distance away and facing them. He was wielding a Buster Sword.

“The Knight Commander seems to be showing off his training.”

Showing off, huh. So he would probably try to cut those steles up. After taking a good look at them, he jumped with his Buster Sword held high above his head. An aura wrapped around the blade of the Buster Sword and he slashed down vertically, leaving the rest to the force of the fall.

The sound of stone being destroyed resounded in the arena. The force of the fall didn’t drop at all, and after the blade of his Buster Sword reached the ground, a stele was cleanly split into two pieces and collapsed to opposite sides, as if he had chopped firewood.

Applause and cheers rose from the seated guests after a brief delay.

It was the Great Sword martial arts skill, Thunder Rend.

The jump from earlier was also a martial arts skill. The Knight Commander placed his hands on his waist, before looking at the King and the audience and bowing.

“That was quite flashy.”

“It’s as clear as day, after all. The person himself enjoys simple battles.”

So said Oswald. It wasn’t like Oswald didn’t have any support, and it looked like he thought it was better and more interesting if they were stronger.

“Everyone, that was splendid. I was able to clearly show the results of my hard training today.”

The showcase appeared to have ended with the Knight Commander, and King Melvin nodded in satisfaction.

“We will call the names of those who were remarkable and displayed great effort. As a reward, please state something you desire.”

As the King’s speech continued, his attendants called out the names of Knights, one by one. Although he said to speak of their desire...the Knights who were called only replied with “We will do as our King wills”. They were leaving the reward to the King’s discretion.

“Lord Chester.”

Although Chester had returned and was present amongst the Knights, he was absent-minded, as he didn’t react immediately when his name was called.

“Lord Chester?”

“Y-Yes! Please forgive me.”

“It is fine. State something you desire.”

“...We will do as our King wills.”

Chester, who dropped to one knee and gave a retainer’s bow, answered, but his words slurred slightly. Although Melvin seemed suspicious, that was just for a moment.

“Umu. The Knights should go wait for further notice. And now—”

After Melvin nodded, he looked towards me.

...The time had arrived, huh? Considering the fact that I defeated a Demon, I had suspected that the Royal Family would have something to say about it.

“The person who fought for our Kingdom ought to become our Little Hero. Because of that, We shall let you receive a suitable reward for your achievements. However, you are different from the knights employed under Us, so We thought that there was a need to have a small chat with you.”

After Melvin told me to come to the King’s Tower later, he turned around and laughed in satisfaction. Cheers praising the King filled the square.

The contents of the reward would be settled later.

I wondered if the reward would lead to me being suddenly employed or something like that...and in my case, it probably couldn’t be revealed in public. I was different from the Knights who were clapping, and it would be hard to follow-up if I said something foolish about it.

“I’ve received an order to guide you, from His Majesty.”

The person who came and said that wore a white cloak. It

was a female Knight who was wearing the magnificent armor of the Imperial Knights.

“In that case, I shall return ahead of you.”

Although Grace said this as if she were going to decline following, the Knight smiled and answered.

“Your friend may also listen. Taking you to the King’s Castle was by all means the announcement from His Majesty.”

“...I’ve received his invitation, but is it fine if I’m accompanied by someone? I-”

“I will say this to everyone. Foreign races such as Elves, Dwarves, and the like are free to work and move about in the Castle. However, will she be fine with just that ring? There won’t be a way to fix its seal inside the Castle if something goes wrong with it.”

“Understood.”

They knew quite a bit about Grace, huh?

Was the source of that information from the Guild, or was it from the School? Or perhaps it was from Dad? It was possible that information was being relayed from him since the beginning.

I had not lied about my position in society, and I wasn't hiding the fact that I was an illegitimate child of the Gartner House. If I considered Dad settling down as Byron's guardian, then it wouldn't be strange for him to do things behind the scenes regarding Grace and me.

We followed the Imperial Knight and headed towards the Knight's Tower, the central area of Theorem Palace.

A giant pillar appeared, passing through the center of the wide hall after we climbed the large stairs and entered the white castle.

The surface of the tower and its interior had a cavity carved into it, which allowed one to enter. The Imperial Knight continued to walk towards the small room located inside the cavity.

“Get on near the center, please.”

Umm, get on near the center meant...?

I looked up at the ceiling and saw a shaft. The wall's surface, which had patterns activated, shone with a considerable amount of white light... but it appeared we could continue to climb higher. At that moment, I understood what the structure was used for.

After doing as the Imperial Knight said, the other two also entered the small room inside the pillar. The Imperial Knight confirmed this, held up her hand to the jewel on the wall, and muttered something.

Mana transmitted into its Magic Circuit and a line of green light rushed towards the floor.

At the same time, the entrance from which we entered became a wall and the platform we were on gradually rose.

“Eh...? What exactly is going on here?”

Grace looked around the inside of the pillar with a bewildered look. It was the feeling of being pressed down by one's own gravity. People who hadn't ridden elevators before probably wouldn't be used to that feeling.

“We can go further up with this, right?”

“You understand it well, don’t you?”

After I confirmed it, the Imperial Knight explained the present situation to us and the two seemed satisfied.

“...It is quite the amazing device.”

“I’m rather surprised at everyone. I thought you would get anxious, but I’m relieved to see that the situation isn’t one where loose stones break.”

The Imperial Knight gave the wide-eyed Ashley a smile.

...It was said that Theorem was originally part of the Labyrinth. It wouldn’t have been strange for this world to have one or two extraordinary devices like this one.

It’s not just that it was still functioning. Rather than calling it maintenance-free, it was more along the lines of the Labyrinth repairing itself. There might have been more devices like these if we headed into the depths of the Labyrinth.

“It certainly is quicker going up and down with this... are the other routes this convenient?”

“Of course there are other ways to enter, like using a flying dragon or using Transfer Magic Circles to transfer in. However, we use the main entrance and the loose stone pillar when we have an audience. The Soldiers and the Knights from the guardroom lead the guests in, and they must use the stairs.”

This “Loose Stone Pillar” probably acted as a countermeasure for invaders. It also served the role of showing the Kingdom’s authority to guests from foreign nations.

The castle was the residence of the Royal Family, but it also fulfilled the role of a fortress. If the Loose Stone ever stopped moving, a corner of the wall would vanish into thin air, as though it had dissolved, and one could head outside the pillar.

“His Majesty has been waiting for you.”

After we exited the elevator room, a long carpet was spread out on the floor.

The small patterns, which the pillar activated, became a corridor that lined up with the pillar.

I wouldn't hesitate to call the corridor itself a work of art.

We passed through the corridor that had panels of artwork, and finally arrived in front of a large door.

“You will have an audience with the King past this door. Allow me to at least do a body inspection.”

“By all means.”

Hmm, so that was why he prepared a female Imperial Knight? I felt that he had taken various things into consideration for me. Would a King like this be interesting?

While I received a body check from the Imperial Knight, I looked at the ornaments in the waiting room, and clearly saw different patterns engraved on the wall and the floor.

It appeared there was a barrier spread out in the waiting room which was connected to the area where the audience would be held. It was a rather strong anti-magic barrier. This was probably their countermeasure for assassination attempts that relied on Magicians.

The Royal Family waited for human contact from the

outside, so it was natural to make preparations.

“You appear to be fine.”

After the Imperial Knight finished the body check, she finally opened the door and proceeded along to the audience chamber.

The Court Nobles, who were supporting Imperial Knights and Court Magicians, and the throne of the King and Queen above the stairs appeared in my view.

“Thank you for coming, Little Hero. As We’ll allow you to directly answer Us, raise your head. You are, without a doubt, Theodore Gartner, the son of Count Henry and Saint Risa, correct?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

After answering him, Melvin put on another smile.

“Being the son of a Saint, you are a genius Magician who is unparalleled, eh? It’s appropriate for you to be a Demon Killer, and your looks are fine. We think We enjoy child

prodigies like you.”

I thought he had no subjects who were similar to me, and apart from the problem of the previous interest he had in me, I felt he was amused, almost as if I were a rare animal. Being unable to ask about this and that regarding Magic... might have been thanks to Mother.

“Well then, the business We have with you is the same as it was relayed earlier. We have thought about giving a reward... and besides coming to Termuilles, We have thought of wanting to speak with you, too, since you have your own thoughts. You may speak freely of the things you are thinking about.”

“If it pleases Your Majesty, then. I’m currently thinking about continuing my job as an Adventurer for a while.”

“Hou, and your reason is?”

“I want to strengthen my abilities. There is also the matter concerning my Mother..”

If he knew about Grace’s matter, then he would have

understood the details of the Kings who were dead. I wouldn't explain it too much.

Speaking of going into the Labyrinth, the Kingdom also encouraged people to do it, and since Demons were involved with the Moon Shrine, even King Melvin probably hoped and wished for me to go into the Labyrinth.

Besides, as long as the Royal Family didn't know my personality well, I thought being welcomed by him was better than suddenly seeking a title, territory, social status, and officers.

“You are already a Demon Killer, yet you say you want to strengthen your abilities?”

Seemingly pleased, King Melvin laughed open-mindedly.

“That was a promising answer. Speaking of for a while... you also have other thoughts regarding your future... Fumu.”

King Melvin looked towards Grace and Ashley, who were behind me, and nodded.

“Very well. With that included, let Us bless your fortune in battle and the road ahead.”

In other words... us going into the Labyrinth would officially be recognized by the Kingdom.

Ashley was the head of Baron Shirn, after all. If I, who was a Demon Killer, would be prevented from leaving the country, then engagements with Nobles would be welcomed by the Kingdom from the beginning, huh?

He might have forced other marriage proposals onto me if Ashley wasn't here.

"However, this will be an item you had personally obtained, so We won't call it a reward. We've investigated your matters a little. You are looking for Staves, right?"

"That's right."

"Then it will be better to grant you a Magic Staff instead of money. There are many in the treasure room, so please go ahead and choose one that you like."

"I'm very grateful for the trouble Your Majesty has taken for me."

“Umu. We’re expecting a lot from your activities.”

From Theorem’s treasure room, huh? Needless to say, it would be a valuable item. It was not something you could buy with money.

To support my current situation and preserve my current relationships, he would grant me a treasure.

To be honest, it was something to be grateful for. Perhaps me being treated well was something the King expected.

Matters regarding Demons were looming, so, without a doubt, he saw me as a valuable asset for battle.

I wished to fight with Demons sooner than later anyways.

Maybe he granted me the Magic Staff because my relationship with his Court had thinned.

Even if I was received warmly in accordance with my intentions, I would never get involved with authority. There probably wasn’t as much opposition from nobles or any difficulties that involved environmental changes, and I thought the one who was most happy about this might have been the King. This was the correct way to use an unnecessary treasure.

“We’ll call out to you given there is another opportunity, so be aware of that. Next is... that’s right, We invite you to the Dinner.”

If there was something next, then maybe they had detected or progressed in the matters about the Moon Shrine or the Demons?

Well, at any rate, there was the Dinner. I was kind of interested in it.

Although, this was similar to the saying: if you must rely on someone, then rely on someone powerful. Being the case that King Melvin, who was at a close distance with me, was of old age, it would be troublesome if he got any backlash in the future.

...It couldn’t be helped to be interested in my future, huh? There was Prince Albert as well, so I wondered how things would turn out?

After that, I wondered what kinds of Magic Staves were resting inside the treasure room.

Chapter 46 – The Dragon Staff, Ouroboros

We headed towards the treasure room within the King's Tower, guided by the Imperial Knights and the Treasury's stewards. As expected of the treasure room in the King's Castle, it was considerably large. The items inside were also arranged in an orderly fashion, along with an inventory of every item inside the room.

(TN: author keeps switching between King's Tower and King's Castle)

“The shelves with Magic Staves are over here.”

“Thank you.”

We followed the stewards to a corner of the room which had Magic Staves laying around, lined up on the shelves in rows.

Speaking of these rare Magic Staves... Unless they were in the King's treasury, they could probably only be found in a Player's Item Box in BFO. The current scene was quite the masterpiece.

Although there were a large number of Staves, it would be difficult to find a suitable one based on my requirements, because the number of choices would instantly shrink.

First of all, it had to be a Long Staff, or else parts of its patterns would be very difficult to hold. Well, that much wouldn't be a problem because even if one was designed with small patterns, it probably wouldn't break with just a Mana-infused strike. If that did happen...then it wouldn't be able to endure Mana Circulation and fall apart.

I briefly went around and looked at the Staves, but only four met the requirements.

The first one was a wooden Staff, carved in the image of a Goddess. It was light, so handling it shouldn't be difficult.

The next Staff was designed in the image of a skull. It also seemed easy to handle but the design was too eye-catching.

The third Staff was silver and embedded with ashen gems at the tip. A dragon was coiled around the staff, with ashen gems protruding from the dragon's head and acting as its horns.

The last Staff was a golden staff...designed with patterns that resembled flower buds at its tip.

As expected of the King's treasury, all of them were Staves that I had never seen before in BFO.

Although these four were the only candidates left, they were selected based on my prerequisites. I still had to get a feel for them by actually infusing Mana into the Staves, so I couldn't decide anything yet.

“May I try infusing Mana into these?”

“Go ahead.”

Since I had obtained permission, I tried to infuse Mana into the Goddess Staff...and spirits started to manifest and dance around me. This Staff forced low-grade spirits to submit to you, huh? Rather than calling it acceptable...Well, it wasn't bad. I decided to look at all four, since I went through the trouble of finding them. After injecting a small amount of Mana into the Skull Staff...the sound of clattering teeth resounded. Hmm...it was useless. Although the others might have some sort of gimmick, I felt that carrying this Staff would be a bit too much.

Then what about the Dragon Staff? When it was placed in

my hand, the first thing I felt was its weight. It was heavier than the others.

The Staff reacted unusually when I injected some Mana into it. Even though I just fed it some ordinary Mana, it gave off the feeling of Mana Circulation...This one, without a doubt, was a Staff designed for Mana Circulation...right?

“...Fumu.”

I cut off my Mana and then infused it with Mana via Circulation.

As soon as I did that, I realized that it amplified my Mana while giving off a low hum. The brilliance of the gems at the tip grew as the Staff accumulated Mana. If I were to use this Staff, it might be able to last.

“May I hear the history of this Staff?”

“Apparently, its name is Dragon Staff Ouroboros. A long time ago, it was brought back from the Labyrinth by an Adventurer and presented to the Palace. ”

“Ouroboros, huh.”

I see. I confirmed that the coiling dragon held its tail in the tip of its mouth. Ouroboros could be identified by looking for snakes and dragons who held their tail like this..It was a rather interesting item.

My heart was already set on this one, but I decided to at least check the last Staff.

The flower buds bloomed after I gave it some Mana. This much was fine, but what came after was not. The sphere located in the center opened up and revealed a glaring eye.

...A Magic Eye Staff, huh? Whether or not this gimmick divided power, there appeared to only be one Mana amplifier...

“I’ll stop here...and take this.”

“Understood. I will go report this to His Majesty. Please acknowledge that matters pertaining to the item that was granted to you might get spread around the Royal Family.”

“That’s fine.”

The Royal Family clearly showed their generosity by rewarding me with this item. If they made it clear that they intended to reward those who did good work and punish those who were bad, it would raise the motivation of the people who worked under them, and would also maintain their standards.

“Have you decided?”

“Yeah, I’ve decided on this Staff.”

Outside the treasury, Grace and Ashley, who had been waiting for me, saw Ouroboros.

Well, this Dragon Staff was the best suited for me. Its utility, weight, and length were excellent.

In terms of abilities, the runner-up would have been the Goddess Staff, but when I held it, I was a bit unsatisfied with its design and weight. Bones and flowers were designs that were similar to cursing someone, so I passed on those as well.

“Well then, I will accompany you to the carriage.”

We climbed onto the carriage, escorted by the smiling

Imperial Knight, and left the Palace.

//

“Welcome home. I’m glad you returned safely.”

I met Sheila after returning to our house. It seemed like she had been waiting for our return.

“Have you been waiting here the whole time?”

“One of the Knights could have come here while you were gone, so I’ve been on alert until you could tell me about what happened.”

“Well...come inside and drink some tea with us.”

“Thanks.”

After we brought Sheila into the house, she asked about today’s events while we drank tea. Ashley had been a bit nervous at the Palace, but after drinking some tea and letting

out a sigh, she looked relieved.

“And with that, if Greg’s faction tries to hang around here once more, shall we meet again?”

Caduceus continued to guard us during the night. In some cases, if Sheila saw the features of people caught in our network and investigated, we could potentially identify them.

“Understood. Is it fine to continue helping out, Theodore?”

“I don’t mind it.”

Having Sheila by my side would be reassuring. So long as Irmhild’s position was still undecided, it would be difficult for Sheila, a member of the Thieves Guild, to protect Irmhild, due to those who were currently in power.

“Nonetheless, this is for my friend’s sake. She is rather eager, you know.”

After she was asked by Grace, Sheila smiled lightly.

“We always, always helped each other out while we grew up, just like sisters. Since that child decided to become an Adventurer in order to live her own life, I placed myself under the Thieves Guild.”

“...That again, why is that?”

“If I have information, it will help me quickly sense danger, and I could help her run away and hide her. I have also obtained skills I can live on, killing two birds with one stone.”

Was it because Irmhild was a Lamia? Well, it was perfectly understandable to have reasons for people you thought of. I also had thoughts about Grace, so I nodded lightly.

Irmhild still didn’t have the capability of going into the Labyrinth, and it appeared that she had recently been working as an Adventurer, doing hunts and such outside of the city. Even if she had the confidence, she had ended up getting tangled up with Snakebite right after entering the Labyrinth.

If Irmhild still couldn’t head into the Labyrinth, Sheila would be relieved. Perhaps a part of that relief could

encourage her to acquire skills.

In exchange for teaching skills to its members, the Thieves Guild had a system where they would collect a part of the profits, in the form of money, earned by using those skills, whether it was stealing or pickpocketing someone. Maybe it was similar to an Adventurer actively utilizing skills to unlock things.

“By the way, what can Irmhild do?”

“She is skillful in handling the bow and arrow. It doesn’t mean that her nose and ears are good like mine, but she can clearly tell the positions of animals within bushes. Although Lamias are skillful in other areas, I’ve never really seen them, since she normally takes the appearance of a human.”

She hunted relying on her vision, not her hearing or smell, did she?

Did she perhaps use thermal perception instead of using infrared vision to see through things, like snakes would?

(ED: Snakes also use thermal perception instead of infrared vision.)

“If Irmhild is free sometime, can’t she come into the

Labyrinth with us?"

"Sheila-san wants to search for her hometown, right?"

Sheila closed her eyes after she was asked that.

"I acknowledge that her ability won't be enough to descend into the lower levels, but I don't think it will be unreasonable for her to go with you. However, I do not intend to rely on such a thing."

If she increased her strength with this, then someday, she might have a chance, huh?

"This will show Irmhild's true strength, right? I can't promise you anything right now."

"Hmm, it will be enough for you to just consider this for now. What are your plans for tomorrow?"

"As usual, I plan to go into the Labyrinth."

I had to do a test run for Ouroboros, so for now, tomorrow's goal would be the small shrine on the 20th floor, a junction that let one pass into the Twilight Forest.

The 20th floor had a small shrine that diverged into various areas. Even if the Labyrinth's structure changed, the paths that connected to those places from the small shrine were fixed.

“Well, putting that aside, once Irmhild-san is released, how about we go play together at the ocean to celebrate?”

“The ocean?”

“We can fish and hunt for things during a low tide. Grilled shellfish is delicious, you know?”

What about...taking a dip in the ocean?

Grace grew up inside the country, not next to the ocean, and Ashley probably didn't know how to swim. Although she listened to me about going to the sea and playing there, Sheila didn't understand too much of it initially.

Well, it wasn't like getting used to water wouldn't be important when we did Labyrinth searches. There was also training that we would do, like using Magic to breath

underwater and walk on water. It would be play under the pretext of training, though.

Chapter 47 – Guardian

“Now then, I wonder if things will go smoothly this time?”

After infusing Mana into the Staff, I attacked the Monster that yelled and rushed at me.

I blocked an Orc hammer that was swung down at me with Ouroboros. After a light impact, a large sound that didn't correspond with the impact resounded. It sounded as if something was exploding, and the Orc's hammer crumbled soon after.

As the grip of the hammer fell to the ground, I jumped at the Orc, which was staring dumbfoundedly at its numb hands.

I gripped Ouroboros, which was giving off a pale shine, and unleashed an attack, blowing the collapsed Orc away. It then rolled into the other Orcs.

“Hmm, it's difficult to adjust it.”

Regarding the quality of the Magic Staff, I had decided to test it out. How much would the loss of converting Mana into

techniques be reduced, how fast would I be able to deploy these techniques, and how much would it strengthen the user's Spells?

In my case, I would be using it during close combat, so I had to take its length, weight, and durability into consideration as well.

As for Ouroboros, all of them were satisfactory. Although it was impossible to suddenly use my full power with it, for now, there weren't any indications that the Staff would break.

This time, I brandished my staff and headed towards the remaining Orcs while making sufficient adjustments.

I engulfed them, cut them up, and sent them flying into the ceiling.

Even when I didn't care about the technique, the Staff seemed to understand me, to some extent, and changed the quality and form of the Mana.

After I subjugated all of the Orcs attacking me, the Dragon on the Staff waved the tip of its tail, which was held in its mouth, around in a seemingly satisfied manner.

As a test, I stroked the area around its throat...and it closed

its eyes, as though it was feeling good.

A Magic Creature similar to a Gargoyle was integrated into the Staff, huh? Such characteristics would clearly be shown if I were to experience real battles.

Dragon Staff Ouroboros was a Magic Staff that incorporated Mana Circulation.

The Magic Creature that was included with the Staff seemed to support Mana Circulation and amplify it.

“That new Staff is really incredible.”

“I have to adjust it accordingly, in a different sense from before.”

The surprised Ashley looked at the Staff as I answered her. Regardless of whether Ouroboros had a heart, it wore a proud expression. Rather than calling it a Dragon, I felt like it was more of a dog.

As expected, the problem was strengthening it too much? If I were to get its adjustments wrong, then maybe it would cause our loot to decrease?

The Dragon Staff was certainly able to endure my Mana, and it had been giving me results so far. Well, maybe I

should say that the results were too good. Whether it was from Spells or strikes, if I got just a bit of the adjustments wrong, the parts of the Monsters that we could strip would disappear.

It was better to be too big than to be too small, and it would be a bit troublesome until I got used to handling it... Should I think of it as good training for Mana control?

(TN: The greater embraces the less = JP proverb: 大は小を兼ねる)

(ED: Modified proverb to “better to be too big than to be too small” based on something a proofer found: Proverb 25.)

“Is it fine if I take the front like this today? I want to get used to the Staff quickly.”

“Understood. Please leave the enemies that come from behind to me.”

Grace said. We proceeded into the Labyrinth with me in the lead, followed by Sheila and Ashley, and Grace covering the rear.

However, the area we were at right now was the 19th Floor. The Labyrinth’s difficulty would surely rise after reaching the 20th Floor, and there were quite a lot of Adventurer groups

searching the floors around here.

The term ‘Volume Zone’ detailed the long and short term market interests for resources, and although Monsters, treasure chests, and harvests weren’t too great for that, it could be said that it was safe with the large number of people around here.

I could still hope to adjust the Staff, even if it was during an unfavorable situation when I was fighting with Monsters.

“There’s a group of five people around the corner.”

“Understood.”

Sheila cautioned me to be careful. I held my Staff on the ground, acting as if I wasn’t excessively keeping my guard up, and then waited for the Adventurer’s group to arrive.

“Oo..ps.”

The Adventurers who appeared opened their eyes wide in astonishment.

“Hello.”

“Hey. You are...the rumored Demon Killer? You’ve been working hard.”

“Yes. May you be blessed with good luck in battles.”

“Same goes for you guys.”

After the Adventurer group gave us vague and forced smiles, they vanished into the cave’s depths.

I would rarely meet Adventurer groups in cave areas by chance, and there wasn’t any trouble in particular. Rather than calling it trouble, it appeared that those guys were more nervous than us. It seemed that I had been completely exposed to the public.

If they became afraid of me, to an extent, and this allowed me avoid any trouble that arose, then it wasn’t an issue.

Now then. The Adventurer group from earlier walked up to the right-hand wall and placed their hands on it...so there was a high chance of finding the stairs if we walked along the wall on the opposite side.

//

As expected, or perhaps I should say shortly afterwards, we found the stairs. After descending to the 20th Floor, the area took the shape of a giant dome. This floor was completely made out of stone, and my impression of it was that it was similar to the heart of Boundary City.

“What is that building over there?”

“That is a small shrine. It seems...that the road splits there.”

At the opposite end of the dome, there were large pillars standing in rows, along with a man-made building that resembled a shrine. A section of its entrance seemed to be lit by a fire. Several groups of Adventurers could be seen walking around the small shrine with torches in their hands, wishing to enter.

The 20th Floor stone stele and gates that led to other areas were inside of the shrine.

In addition to that, even the diverging points in the road were fixed on this floor. In other words, after one chose their path, there wouldn't be any stone stele to take them back to the first floor.

After we entered the shrine, we saw a few Adventurer groups gathered together. They looked serious, for some reason.

Even the receptionist, Heather, was amongst them.

“Oh! Theodore-san!”

Heather spotted me and approached in a hurried manner. There was a Red Dimension Stone in her hand.

“...What’s wrong? For you to be in such a place.”

“About that, it seems that a Guardian appeared beyond the diverging point.”

“It’s...on such a high floor?”

Heather nodded at me seriously.

Guardians. They were strong Monsters that had a chance of appearing anywhere after the diverging point on the 20th Floor of the Labyrinth. That didn’t mean that their appearance rate was high there...but one had to take the

appearance of a Guardian into their calculations if one searched beyond the 20th Floor.

Out of all of the floors it could appear on, it was this one, and it probably wasn't common for there to be Adventurer groups who had the means to oppose it. However, it was certain that every floor beyond the 20th Floor would become more diverse and increase in difficulty.

"There are Adventurer Groups who fled from the Guardian and came back here with the Red Dimension Stone...and after meeting with those guys to talk about it, they said that they saw other Adventurer groups in the same area. The people outside are recruiting Adventurers who have the ability to take part in the rescue. I was called out to watch over this place, and I expected Theodore-san's group to appear, since you guys were close to the Caves."

"In other words, this is a rescue request?"

"That's right. The opponent is a Sword Boar located in the Twilight Forest. It's not unreasonably strong, but I promise the rewards will be great, since you will be taking part in the subjugation and the rescue."

The amount Heather presented to us for taking on this request was 1500 Kilig. The rewards for success would be calculated separately.

She said that it was in the Twilight Forest. One way or another, we had to subjugate it. Otherwise, we couldn't proceed.

It seemed that other Adventurer Groups had not come here as reinforcements. Perhaps they were in the city or currently somewhere inside the Labyrinth? I didn't know the reason, but surely we could bring more of them along if we could capture the Twilight Forest.

In other words, it appeared that we were the only ones who could oppose this Guardian. Unless the Adventurer groups who were left behind had the means to escape, they would probably be treated harshly when we formed subjugation units.

“That’s fine. I’ll go do it.”

I didn’t need to think too much about whether or not I would have accepted. I had come to the Labyrinth in order to train myself. However, the problem was:

“Concerning Grace’s group...”

“Please bring us along with you. I already understand that Theo is a lot stronger than me. However, I hate not being there when Theo fights.”

Grace said as she placed her hand on her own chest, as if it were natural.

As far as this was concerned, there was also Ashley and Sheila.

“I think it’s better to quickly treat those who are injured. It’s unavoidable if Theodore-sama says that it’s a hindrance.”

Ashley said as she looked directly at me. It seemed that she also wanted me to bring her along.

“I’ll go too. I’ll prevent any sneak attacks, and I won’t overlook anyone who needs rescue.”

Sheila said, without any hesitation.

There wasn’t any time to talk it over and persuade them. What they said certainly wasn’t wrong. If Ashley and Sheila

were with me, there would be many areas other than fighting where they could help out. Ashley herself had thoughts of wanting to become stronger, and Sheila wanted to improve the Adventurer's Guild's impression of her. I wanted to consider their feelings too.

Our opponent would be the Guardian, Sword Boar. It was located in the Twilight Forest, huh?

It would be rather delicious if we could defeat it. However, having this Monster be a direct opponent for Ashley and Sheila would make them bear a lot of responsibility. I had also taken the Red Dimension Stones and Caduceus into consideration. Well then.

“...Understood. The most important thing is for me to be the vanguard to protect you guys. In exchange, Sheila will let everyone escape with the Red Dimension Stone if she is instructed to do so by me. There will also be cases where Sheila will feel that it is too dangerous, without waiting for my instructions...and if it's the worst possible case, I want the two of you to flee with Ashley, without fail. I'll bring you guys along if you can promise this.”

“It's a promise, definitely.”

“Thank you very much, Theodore-sama!”

There wasn't any worry of getting lost in the Twilight Forest, since the two of them would be protected by Caduceus.

“Understood. I'll explain the important points of the Twilight Forest along the way.”

“Yes, please do.”

“Now then, Heather-san. We'll be heading out, so please continue guiding everyone.”

“Please be careful!”

After looking at Heather, who had a serious expression, and the Adventurers who were here, we headed towards the gate to enter the Twilight Forest. Then I jumped inside of it without any hesitation.

Chapter 48 – The Twilight Forest

The moment we dove into the gate, the world changed. The current air was one unique to that of a forest.

It was unusually dark out. I wouldn't say that it was fine to use Night Vision Magic though.

If one used Night Vision Magic, they would see a faint haze drifting around the forest, which would reduce their vision. That was why you couldn't ensure your vision with magic once you reached the Twilight Forest.

There were Spells one should cast which took priority over that, like the Spell 'Psycho Field' to counter the Whispermush, which could cast sleeping Spells on you.

(TN: Wisparmush -> Whispermush, slight change in name)

“What’s that glowing flower over there?”

Sheila asked as she carefully watched our surroundings. A clear, rich light that was green or violet...appeared to be shining dimly. From their point of view, it was probably a magical scene.

“That is Fairy Light. If you pick it up and carry it with you, it will become your light source. However, if you use fire as a light source, you will be simultaneously attacked by the surrounding plants, so please be careful.”

After I answered her, Sheila surveyed her surrounding and raised her eyebrows. Correct, it was something magical, but this place was unsafe.

The haze drifting around in this Forest...was also the Fairy Light’s pollen.

The Twilight Forest was a place with unique plants that didn’t need sunlight to grow. Naturally, its ecosystem was also unusual.

Plant swarms that attacked you because of fire weren’t treated as Monsters.

With that said, it would be better to chop down plants that became obstacles one by one. The Labyrinth would turn them into walls if too many showed up, causing them to obstruct you, since the trees here were treated as the Labyrinth’s walls.

It seemed that we couldn’t take any shortcuts, such as phasing through walls or the floor.

There were even those who were sent back due to dying from being buried alive in BFO.

After Sheila picked up one of the Fairy Lights, she confirmed it by lighting the area around her feet.

“...A lot of people’s tracks are here.”

It was probably because there were too many diverging points. Even their tracks would disappear if the Labyrinth’s structure changed.

“Let’s catch up with the Sword Boar if we discover its tracks.”

In terms of which order to do things, it was better to search for the Guardian before eliminating it.

Guardians were territorial, and their top priority was to remove invaders.

There were many cases where people blocked the stairs and stone steles so that it wouldn’t retreat to the lower floors.

In regards to this floor, it couldn’t go back with the stone stele, so if it occupied the stairs, then the invaders wouldn’t be able to flee.

That was why I had decided to approach the Sword Boar as we continued heading towards the stairs. I understood that the Adventurers could only keep moving forward, so I looked for a chance to attack the Sword Boar.

Everyone proceeded on the path that led inside of the Forest while holding up the Fairy Light. I wanted to continue forward while watching to see if there were any reactions from humans from Life Detection, but-

“–They’re coming! There’s a lot of them, so I can’t give any specifics!”

As I reacted to Sheila’s words, Life Detection was interrupted.

Nothing was picked up by my Life Detection Magic. What I was trying to find, along with the response from humans, were enemies that consisted mostly of Plant Monsters. An enemy’s response would fade into the background. If the magic was interrupted, then you had to cancel their responses individually and start over.

Murderous plants, called Killer Plants, rushed at us as a large tremor propagated from the bushes. They were Monsters that walked with their roots and attacked with their branches.

I felt that Evil Weeds would probably turn out like this if they ever grew gigantic and became violent.

I repelled the attacks from their tree lumps and crushed them head-on with the Dragon Staff.

“You’re in the way!”

The Killer Plants that headed towards Grace were cut in half.

“We won’t have the spare time to fight them one by one. Let’s move forward as we eliminate them.”

In order to ensure the rescue and prevent the number of victims from increasing, the subjugation took priority. Naturally, we didn’t have the time to strip them of their materials, and fighting them was probably a waste of time.

During this period, low, whispering voices could be heard here and there. They were Spells the Whispermush used as they lurked inside the bushes. Unfortunately for them, they wouldn’t succeed, since I had used magic to counter them, but allowing them to freely cast their Spells wasn’t really something to feel happy about.

After I shot a fireball into those bushes, burning

Whispermush rushed out and ran in all four directions, surrounding the tree lumps. Umu.

//

“I smell human blood.”

Just as we came to a forked road, Grace stopped and raised her eyebrows.

“Which way does it lead?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t really know. The air is becoming stagnant.”

Wind didn’t blow in the Twilight Forest. It seemed that we couldn’t follow it through her sense of smell alone, since the air was becoming stagnant. Sheila stopped listening to Grace and surveyed the surroundings while paying strong attention to the ground.

“...There are bloodstains, over there.”

Sheila ran in the direction she indicated.

Shortly afterwards, we discovered some collapsed Adventurers.

Whether or not Grace was aware of the smell of blood that was drifting around, she lightly shook her head.

Altogether, it was three people. It was an awful sight.

One was laying in a pool of blood, and another was thrown on top of a bush. The last one was stuck in a tree's trunk.

There were wounds all over their bodies. We could see traces of the rampaging Sword Boar. The ground around us was caved in and large trees were broken.

“The two over there are still alive.”

The people marked by Life Detection were the ones thrown on top of the bush and stuck in the tree's trunk. Unfortunately, the other remaining person had already taken his last breath. As we reached the two people who were still alive, the light that displayed their Life Response was weakening. We had to treat them immediately, or else it would be dangerous.

“Please hang in there!”

Ashley proceeded to use Healing Magic immediately after laying them down on the ground. Although their wounds closed, it was impossible to return the blood that was flowing out of their bodies. Even casting a stamina enhancing Spell would probably only recover half of it. One of the men, who was as white as a sheet, let out a groan.

“Ugh, y-you guys are...”

“We came to save you, please hang in there.”

“We’re s-saved, huh? Pl...ease. That damned thing went after our companions.”

The man pointed into the Forest as he said that.

Was he saying that his friends became a decoy so that he wouldn’t be killed?

Perhaps it placed a priority on eliminating the others just as he was incapacitated.

“Are you able to use a Red Dimension Stone? How many of your remaining companions are left?”

“Ah, of course. Please save them for me. There are two people...left.”

I handed the man a Red Dimension Stone that I had been holding.

One flaw of the Red Dimension Stone was that it took a bit of time to use, up until the transfer gate fully expanded. That was why it was necessary to use it after creating the safest possible situation. As the man hugged onto the corpse of his companion, he threw the Red Dimension Stone onto the ground. After that, a magic circle expanded out from the center of the area where the stone shattered, and finally, a pillar of light rose into the air. The man vanished inside of it, along with his companions.

Held items could be brought outside the Labyrinth with the Red Dimension Stone. In other words...the companion’s corpse. This time, those guys would probably be transferred to the Shrine at the Labyrinth’s entrance.

“I’ve somewhat figured out the Sword Boar’s tracks. Let’s give chase immediately.”

“Let’s go.”

//

When we chased after the Sword Boar's trail, we heard a war cry from further inside the forest. We were close enough to it that we could hear that, but–

At that moment, it became noisy inside the Forest. Rustling leaves resounded from the bushes.

“What was that just now?”

“...The Guardian is calling over the Monsters on this floor.”

I didn't know why...but it seemed to have gathered some companions.

After we rushed towards the voice, the area opened up. Two humans, marked by the Life Detection, could be seen huddling shoulder to shoulder on top of a tree.

I stopped everyone with my hand and looked at the situation they were in from the tree's shadow.

The Sword Boar was over there. It had a rather large body. Its restlessness didn't fit its image and it was moving around,

unable to calm down.

It was persistently sniffing its surroundings, and it appeared to be smashing into many trees and uprooting them, as if taking out its irritation on them. The Adventurers on the tree had apparently used a Spell to blind it, but it was likely that they couldn't deceive all of that thing's senses. It also hadn't found me yet because they were somewhat blocking both its sense of smell and hearing with Wind Magic.

The Sword Boar was a Demihuman that had a hard, steel-like body and sharp fangs. It wasn't a pig, but a wild boar. It was a superior variant of an Orc.

Its name originated from the sharpness of its body. Even if you held onto it, it would tear you to shreds. This was the basis of its defense. Its claws and fangs were also unusually sturdy.

Basically, it was a Monster that used brute force to attack. Although I said that it used the brute force approach, since it concealed strong, Guardian-class Mana inside of its body, its Magic Resistance was also high. Its stored Mana was the basis of its defense against magic.

In short, it wouldn't allow itself to be tied down like a normal large Orc.

The Sword Boar looked like it was going to find the hiding Adventurers by rampaging.

The Adventurers on the tree seemed to be feeling nervous about when it would come up to them.

Now then, it was possible that the Spell I wanted to show off for blowing that thing away would engulf those two as the Sword Boar approached them. Having said that, as long as it rallied Monsters together, I didn't really have the time to leisurely think about things. It was the same as not being able to cast powerful Spells when a battle turned chaotic.

“I’ll go aggro it, so can you do what you did when we fought the Killer Ants?”

“The same thing you say...the method of using the Defense Field to endure it?”

“Yes.”

Grace nodded.

I see. As long as I avoided a chaotic battle, I had a way to round the adventurers up in one swoop. It was also possible to flee with the Red Dimension Stone if one could suppress

an approaching enemy.

For that reason, I had to maintain a Spell that would allow them to enter a barrier. Grace would draw the Sword Boar's aggro, and we would head towards those people?

However, for her to be a decoy...

Did she understand my worries? After our gazes met, Grace gave me a weak smile, as if she was a bit troubled by something.

“If I could speak truthfully, it’s painful right now, since the smell of human blood from earlier was too thick. Because of that, I want to let off some steam and go on a rampage. Won’t you leave that thing to me?”

“I’ll provide some backup if I find it dangerous, alright?”

“Yes.”

She smiled at me sweetly and then laughed happily.

Chapter 49 – The Thing Grace Is Aiming For

“Now then.”

After Grace’s smile vanished, she casually walked towards the Sword Boar, with her axe held in both hands.

As for the Boar in question, maybe because it felt disrespected by the slender Grace who had suddenly appeared, since only one person was facing it, it let out an irritated roar, spread its arms, and rushed her.

Grace slowly bent over. Just as she was about to close the distance in a single leap–

“Defense Field!”

I completed my Barrier Spell as I ran behind the Boar. While it was distracted by my presence behind it, Grace kicked off the floor and charged towards it.

The Sword Boar was completely caught off guard. Grace’s axe, loaded with power, struck the Boar’s side, and it let out a growl.

The sounds of clashing metal, something unimaginable, rang out as the axe struck the creature's body.

Grace didn't pay it any mind and, leaving it up to her power, followed up with her arm.

As her power was driven into the Boar's giant figure, it moved against its will. Both of its legs, which were firmly on the ground, were impacted, and it was enough to force it to retreat, while hollowing the earth at the same time.

Grace's attack bore into the Sword Boar's side, cutting into its flesh. However, it wasn't enough for it to be a fatal wound. After it looked at its own stomach leaking blood, it paused momentarily, before glaring at Grace and letting out an angry yell. Maybe this meant that it had received an unexpected wound. It vigorously closed in and charged at Grace while swinging its arms downward.

Grace, who was facing it, didn't retreat a single step, and decided to make a head-on counterattack instead.

Its arms versus her axe. She grasped it, perhaps planning to completely knock the Sword Boar down in one attack by smashing its giant body. Sounds of clashing metal resounded as the two collided against each other, and every time their weapons repelled one another, sparks flew out. Seriously...its fur wasn't a joke.

The Sword Boar, which was randomly swinging its arms and legs around, and Grace, who held her axe in both hands, struck each other. Although Monsters had gathered around them, the ones that tried to carelessly interfere were tossed into the air and blown away, like a small ship that had been engulfed by a typhoon.

...Still, Grace seemed to have decided on fighting like that. She had been fighting the angry Sword Boar while intentionally leading it towards the group of Monsters. Although her plan was easily understood as 'Monster vs Monster, raw force vs raw force', it wouldn't end by just overpowering it that way. The obstacles in their line of attack might as well have not been there. Every time their power collided with each other, the surrounding Monsters vanished.

I didn't know whether the Monsters that were trying to interfere with the fight between Grace and the Sword Boar had given up or not, but they decided to come towards me. However, their movements faltered as they were blocked by the Defense Field, and then they were diced into fine pieces by Sheila. Caduceus also pierced them as it pleased, and then they were blown away by Ashley's carefully aimed Mace.

“Theodore-sama! Go help out the Adventurers, as they are still unable to flee!”

“Understood!”

The Adventurers on the tree seemed to be hurt, and they would be able to join the battle if their wounds were healed by Ashley's Healing Magic.

After taking a side glance at them, I kept on dealing with the Monsters with my weapon and magic. Regardless, these Adventurers were able to come all the way to the 20th Floor, huh?

There was no reason to retreat if we were capable of maintaining the frontline with Defense Field. I decided to follow everyone as I lowered the number of Monsters.

I grabbed their heads and sent them flying into the air. I struck down the Monsters that were approaching the barrier with Ouroboros and activated a Spell.

“Rock Press!”

Rock Press was a Rank 5 Earth Spell that summoned a large rock from the sky, which went around and beat up the group of Monsters. Everyone's burden would drop if I

decreased the number of Monsters.

Grace was able to suppress the Sword Boar by herself.

“Fufufu.”

She squinted her eyes, which were dyed the color of blood, and smiled sweetly.

Although their battle of physical strength continued, a change started to occur as I decreased the number of Monsters.

In other words, the focus of the battle began to concentrate solely on the fight between Grace and the Sword Boar. The battle wouldn't change from her continuing to counterattack the Sword Boar by swinging her axe around. However, slowly but surely, the Sword Boar was being forced to retreat as she nearly sent it flying. Grace herself maintained a fixed distance, without retreating a step, so it would naturally turn out like this.

“Goooah!”

As the Sword Boar was continually forced back, it let out an irritated yell.

Although it was a Guardian class Monster, blood seemed to be flowing from various parts of its body after it had been hit by Grace's axe quite a few times.

The Boar's movement didn't appear to be slowing from this, and the wounds it received on its side started to close up. Whether or not the Sword Boar had decided that its wounds from Grace's attacks weren't serious, its movements gradually became sloppy.

Her aim was to simultaneously unleash attacks on its body with her axe, without letting it evade.

Grace evaded with her upper body, letting the attacks go past her. Its log-like arms slashed the front of her bangs, making it flutter in the wind. Maybe the Sword Boar felt some type of effect from this method of battling, and the tip of its mouth distorted as it laughed.

Grace furrowed her brows momentarily.

After the Sword Boar's arm, which attempted to grasp her head like it was going to smash it, bent down and flew past her, she dug up a stone that was buried in the ground with her axe and tossed it up to her eyes. She aimed at the Sword Boar's solar plexus and kicked the stone, as if it had been pushed out by the tips of her toes.

“Gah!”

The stone broke, causing the Sword Boar to retreat backwards and forcibly draw a breath. From slashing in a line, to striking a specific point, it was unable to deal with the change in the pattern of her attacks. Even if it had been thinking of figuring out her attack method, the Sword Boar, which was forced backwards, bared its fangs and quickly flew into a rage.

“Even I’m not interested in imitating its Regeneration ability. Rather than that, I have something I want to test out.”

As she widened the distance, Grace let out a sigh.

Then she headed towards the Sword Boar, which was squealing and charging at her, and threw her axe, which was in her right hand, at it with an intense force. The Boar crossed its arms and received her attack, which flew as fast as a bombshell. The impact of the collision stopped its charge. The Boar recovered its stance and tried to rush at Grace once again, but she wasn’t there anymore. The Monsters roamed about, trying to find her.

At that time, Grace was in mid-air. Her axe, held high above her head, was wrapped in a violet light. She was planning to use the impact of her descent and her physical

strength. That light was different from the usual color and was, without a doubt, her Aura.

“Haaah!”

Together with a spirited yell, her axe, cloaked in her Aura, crashed down directly onto the Sword Boar’s head. A tremendous, deafening roar rang out.

Its arms, which had tried to receive the attack, and its tusks, which were sticking out from its mouth, were split apart, and the remaining force carved a deep crevice into the ground of the Twilight Forest.

In front of the Sword Boar, Grace shook off the blood on her blade. After some time passed, the Boar’s body split cleanly into two pieces down the middle and collapsed.

“...I’m sorry. I also want to accompany Theo, so I have no choice but to stop at the same place.”

Her way of learning was probably by watching others...and what she had used just now was a Skill. Even if it was martial arts, it appeared that she had some Skills. Perhaps she had thought of something like this after seeing the Skill of the Knight Commander. The Skill’s level of proficiency wasn’t at

the same level as the Knight Commander's, but in Grace's case, her stats were originally different. Even if her concentration and handling of her Aura was still poor, she could display its power.

After clearing away the remaining Monsters, I transferred any possible loot and the Sword Boar's giant body before returning to the Shrine, together with the people we rescued, via a Red Dimension Stone.

Maybe they felt relieved from being saved, but the Adventurers who returned with us fell down on the spot. I also asked Grace to not draw any attention, so I activated the seal on her ring.

Grace pressed her hand against a pillar and let out a long sigh. Her complexion didn't look good, and her condition didn't seem to be great.

“Are you ok?”

“Umm...What should I say?”

Grace mumbled to herself.

“Grace-sama, is Healing Magic necessary?”

“Are you injured?”

Although Ashley and Sheila, who both looked at her with worry, called out to her, Grace waved her hands in denial after making a surprised expression.

“O-Oh, you’re wrong. I’m sorry for making you worry... about this. I’m just a little bit hungry.”

Aah, she had THAT type of impulse?

Perhaps Grace was feeling embarrassed, or a sense of guilt? Her body ended up shrinking from embarrassment.

Even if we had the same blood type, perhaps she was saying that the vampiric impulses she felt from my blood was fundamentally different.

For example, was her power dependant on the smell of a person’s blood, or destruction and devastation? Thanks to these things, Grace ended up being dragged down by her vampiric side, and even if she was released, because of her

mixed blood, more or less, she couldn't get drunk on madness, while at the same time being enhanced by it. She felt a sense of anger, hatred, shame, and the like.

Perhaps this was the reason she wanted the Boar to be left up to her?

“...It’s been a long time since I’ve felt this impulse. Even though my condition always turned out fine thanks to Theo, it appeared again. I’m very sorry for Theo, and for those Adventurers...”

“Well, that’s fine. I’ll go cook something today, after we go back. Still...a large portion of it might turn out to be mushrooms.”

We had collected enough Whispermush to make a mountain. After informing them of this, Grace smiled and nodded lightly.

“...Yes, thank you very much.”

Chapter 50 – Irmhild’s Release

“So, because of that, I will sell that for half the price.”

“Thank you very much. However, is that okay?”

Heather asked me with a surprised expression.

“The Guild also has various ways to use Guardian class Monsters, right?”

“...That’s right. That is very kind of you.”

The giant body of the Sword Boar was laid across the floor of the Guild’s lobby.

However, only half of it was there. It had been cleanly split into two pieces, so it wasn’t really necessary to discuss what price I should sell it for.

This wasn’t just limited to the Sword Boar. Even if it was just a piece of one, Guardians could be sold for a fairly high price, since no part of their body was useless.

In regards to stripping the Sword Boar of its materials, the first thing that could be removed was its fur. Even though it was from a dead body, the durability of its fur was excellent. The fur was light and firm, while possessing the defensive power of an average suit of armor. There was no need to comment on its usefulness.

As for the ways of using this fur, one had to consider how to handle it.

Regarding the other parts of its body, its meat was edible, and it was possible to produce fairly large items by extracting its Magic Stone, so its body was very valuable.

Even its fangs could probably be cut into spear tips.

“Amazing. It’s my first time seeing the dead body of a Guardian.”

“What’s up...with that fur?”

There was a large group of people surrounding the half-body of the Sword Boar in the Guild’s lobby.

While the Guild employees were assessing the body, spectating Adventurers stood nearby, chattering with excitement.

“Who defeated that thing?”

After someone asked that question, they huddled together and whispered in low voices.

“Look, it’s that...”

“Aah, the Demon Killer?”

“It’s obvious that he would be there.”

(TN: There as in the boss area)

“After defeating a Demon, that child defeated a Guardian? It wasn’t killed by one of his companions?”

Hmm. It wasn’t me who defeated it, but Grace.

“Aren’t those companions similar to him? It looks like they were brought along to subjugate the Guardian.”

“Ah, those girls, huh?”

“They’re with the Demon Killer, so it’s appropriate for them, right?”

Those guys looked at Grace’s group and were shocked. Well...I understood how they felt. As the matter of Grace’s strength spread, I thought that it would be easy for her to avoid trouble and that she would want to be welcomed by everyone. However, I felt uncomfortable having them spread rumors like that.

According to Heather, the Adventurers who were transferred earlier were receiving treatment inside the Guild’s medical room. The employees had to finish calculating the value of the loot before I could go home, and my Circulation Refinement and Ashley’s Healing Magic could be useful to them, so I decided to pay them a visit.

//

As I walked towards the medical room, I could hear clear singing, and the sound of a harp.

As I listened to it, the song became mysterious, calming my heart and making my fatigue vanish.

As expected, it was coming from the medical room. Perhaps it was one of the people who were with Irmhild when we met her before. The door opened after I knocked, and the Monster girls stopped their performance to look towards me. It seemed that Dominique the Harpy and the Eustia the Siren were singing, while Irmhild was playing the harp.

The Adventurers were lying on top of beds. I felt that they looked a lot better than when we saw them in the Labyrinth.

Ashley was wrapping up any healing that required Magic.

The three people who were gathered and singing the lullabies had to be part of Irmhild's group. I thought that their band, which consisted of a Lamia, Harpy, and a Siren, was a wonderful lineup.

Those three belonged to races that had the specialty of being able to infuse Mana into their songs and performances. In this case, the effect of their song was to make others feel calmer, relieve pain, and strengthen regeneration.

The Guild might have prepared the harp in order to ask for their help. If that was the case, my guess was probably correct. At the very least, there weren't any Adventurers who would complain about the members of a healing group at the Guild.

“Irmhild.”

Sheila ran up to Irmhild and took her hand. Irmhild stared at her with wide eyes, looking surprised.

“Sheila and Theodore-san’s group too. I heard that you guys fought with a Guardian. Did you guys get injured?”

“No, it’s not like that. We were the ones who brought them here, and we thought that we should come take a look at their conditions.”

“Aah, so it’s like that.”

Irmhild sighed with relief before beaming with joy.

“You let us listen to something quite nice.”

“Ara, thank you. I’m different from the other two, as this isn’t within my field of expertise, so it’s a bit embarrassing for me. For us Lamias, this ability is like an extra benefit.”

Was that so? Rather than wanting to criticize her, I thought that her performance could bring in plenty of money. For example, if I were to talk about the quality of her performance, I thought that she was quite skilled, and technique wasn't always proportional to a song's effect. Amateurs still wouldn't know the fine details of Cursed Songs.

“Earlier, we were talking about whether or not we should work at the Guild.”

“Yeah. We don't have any place to go back to, and we won't be treated roughly here.”

Eustia nodded at Dominique's words.

Lynette's goal was to sell these girls, and I didn't mean that they were expecting these girls to sing and perform...not to mention, Cursed Songs had high utility. Due to the fact that the mind affects the body, they were known to be unique, troublesome Skills with a wide range of possible effects when confronting enemies.

Even if non-magical Healing was simple and one excelled at it, if Healing Magic was used at the same time, one could expect a synergistic effect. As for Players, there were

Minstrels...but in BFO, it was a minor job.

Hmm. If these girls were stationed at the Guild as a Healing Unit, they would be able to establish their position in society and lower the death rate of Adventurers. It was seemingly one good thing after another. As for Irmhild, I felt that she supported the two one-sidedly and was simply nodding in agreement.

“Theodore-san, we’ve finished our assessment.”

Heather finally came over and told me.

“Understood. I’ll go over there.”

“Before that, Heather, could you come here...for a bit?”

Sheila called for Heather.

“What is it?”

“Is Irmhild still not allowed to return home?”

“About that, it’s better for them to stay here for a while, you know. The authorities are on edge right now, and they’ll be safer here at the Guild.”

“Hmm...I understand that, but...”

“Sheila, I’m fine here. Having everyone say that they’re getting better is making me happy.”

“...Yeah.”

Sheila’s ears drooped. She seemed to have gotten depressed.

Even if we were only talking about the Knights, Irmhild’s position was still delicate. From the way Heather spoke, I could guess that the authorities were more nervous than necessary, thanks to the aftermath of the Demon incident.

In regards to the Guild’s position, their actions were closer to protecting Irmhild, rather than hiding her identity.

I was considering going to the sea and playing with everyone if she were released...but it seemed that there were

still many things I had to overcome.

“What about everyone else?”

“They’re children who belong to an orphanage...in the Western District.”

...I see. There certainly was such a...facility.

“Umm, if there is anyone who can guarantee your identity, I think it would be fine for you to leave? If you’re fine with letting me help you, let’s cooperate.”

Ashley said, after intently watching the situation develop to this point.

She was speaking from the viewpoint of a Lord and a Noble, huh? For her, this probably wasn’t something she could overlook.

“I’ll also help out.”

“...Is that fine?”

I nodded. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Grace smile happily in understanding.

Grace's future and Ashley's path. Even if I tried to compare them from my point of view, they shouldn't be contradicting. I had also recognized Sheila as a party member, so I should be willing to cooperate with these girls.

After listening to me, Sheila looked at Heather with expectant eyes.

Heather gave a helpless smile and answered:

“Lady Ashley and Theodore-san, is it? If it's you two, then I think it would be fine.”

Chapter 51 – The Bath and Swimsuits

The Western District. The port and the slums within Termuilles were relatively dangerous areas. The orphanage that Sheila and Irmhild had spoken of was also located there.

That being said, the orphanage was quite far from the slums and the port, so it was probably a safer area within the Western District.

“You two, what’s your relationship with the orphanage?”

I asked Irmhild, who was sitting in the driver’s seat of the carriage. Even if her identity had been secured by Ashley or me, it was necessary to have a name. In her case, to make it easier to understand, we had settled on letting her work around here.

(ED: Theo is apparently talking about Irmhild needing an id in this passage.)

“I was in their care in the past. If I was sent out to do something for their sake, the children would end up trying to not let me go.”

“Then, wasn’t it painful being held inside the Guild?”

“Yeah. It’s been a long time since I’ve gone outside. I’m really happy.”

She thanked us and smiled happily.

The carriage traveled down the path that led towards the Western District. The shaking of the carriage had gradually... intensified. I felt that the pavement had become rough.

“As I thought, there are a lot of patrols around.”

Sheila, who was sitting next to Irmhild, muttered while looking over her shoulder. When I followed her line of sight, I saw soldiers on patrol.

Certainly, we had managed to come this far without trouble because several similar patrols had passed by.

“Hmm, that’s right. They don’t always come to the Western District.”

...Did this happen after the Demon incident?

If a suspicious outsider went into hiding, then it was possible that the soldiers would suspect the Western District, and if one considered that a Demon had resided in the Cardiff residence, this is probably how it would end up.

Once we were inside the Western District, the carriage finally entered a relatively sturdy building with a large courtyard.

“Ah, it’s Irm!”

We returned to the courtyard after parking the carriage in the stable, and the children’s voices rang out.

“Eh, big sister Irm!?”

The other children immediately reacted to that voice and came out of the building, rushing forward. A fair number of Beast people, Elves, and other races appeared. Judging by this, it appeared that Irmhild was quite loved by them.

I tried to take a brief glance at the children’s conditions, and those who had come here didn’t appear to be unnaturally thin or unhealthy.

It appeared that this orphanage was hosted and managed by the Moon Shrine.

Building it in the Western District was probably related to the low cost of land there, and the location seemed to have been selected carefully.

Due to this, the children's lives had probably been simple, and in regards to their daily necessities, it looked like their standards had been maintained.

“Big brother’s group, who are you guys?”

The other children tilted their heads and asked.

“Umm, we’re Irmhild’s friends, I guess?”

“So it’s like that! Nice to meet you, big brother!”

Since they reached out their hands, I decided to respond with a handshake.

“What’s wrong? For everyone to gather in such a way.”

A middle aged woman wearing a Moon Shrine robe appeared from the building, and her expression brightened when she realized that Irmhild was within the crowd of people.

“Well, well, it’s Irmhild!”

“It’s been a long time since we’ve seen each other, Director.”

//

“It’s delicious!”

The children eating the cooked Whispermush showed us bright smiles.

We had come to the orphanage because we had too much Whispermush. Although it would have been more efficient to dry and store them, since we struggled over deciding what to have for dinner every day, I had decided to treat the children at the orphanage with some saute, deep-fry, soup, and the like. The orphanage staff also helped out, so it turned into a buffet-style party.

“Grace, how are you? Have you calmed down?”

“Yes. I’ve shown you something unsightly.”

She made a reluctant smile and became quiet.

“Irmhild, what will you do from now on?”

The director and Irmhild had been talking with each other.

Although it appeared that Irmhild had hidden the fact that she was a Lamia in the past, based on their conversation, I couldn’t tell if the director had already known about it or not.

Maybe the people at the orphanage had heard about her secret being exposed, but at the very least, the director didn’t speak harshly to Irmhild.

“Hmm. I had been thinking of continuing my job as an adventurer, but it looks like this one wish of mine is no good.”

Irmhild answered, tilting her small head.

As for her personal wish, it wasn’t that she wanted to be able to display her true strength, but that she wanted to dive

into the Labyrinth.

Realizing that wish would put her into a slightly difficult position due to the matters of the Demon and the Moonlight Shrine, but that would change if Ashley or I took responsibility for it.

Obtaining materials and the ease of Leveling were related to each other, and since I had plans to focus on collecting items and hunting in the Twilight Forest, I felt that I could bring her along with us, if she was skilled enough.

Otherwise, I could let Irmhild help out with the housework, or she could devote herself to the Healing Group at the Guild with the other two girls.

The first thing we decided to do was to dive down into the Labyrinth together.

It was possible that we would have to go shopping as well, since Irmhild would need a bow and arrows.

“It was Theodore-sama, right? In regards to Sheila and Irmhild’s matter, I look forward to working with you.”

With that, the director bowed.

“Understood.”

Right after their conversation wrapped up, Irmhild got up from her seat and brought over a Lute. She began to play it after placing it on top of her knee.

Compared to Dominique and Eustia, Irmhild was a step behind them and was more reserved...but she probably enjoyed putting on a performance with her instrument. She closed her eyes, smiled, and moved her slender fingertips along the strings, as if she were tickling them; it was both elegant and simple. A pleasant sound drifted through the dining hall.

This time it wasn't a Cursed Song, but more of a normal performance. The children, who had been clamouring earlier, quieted down and began to listen.

Hmm, this was a harp lute, right?

In regards to her weapon...a few interesting ideas came to mind.

Should I quickly prepare and arrange them for her before we dive into the Labyrinth?

(ED: Harp lute.)

//

After heading out of the orphanage, we went around and shopped for all kinds of things, then returned home.

Irmhild was still under the Guild's custody, so she returned there, and Sheila went back to her own place in the Western District.

If we could lay the groundwork for Irmhild's matters and make her better known, would those two start to live with each other?

I was currently relaxing in the bath.

“Theo, shall I wash your back?”

I could hear Grace's voice coming from the dressing room.

“Hmm...I'll leave it to you, then.”

I realized that, for some reason, she hadn't said anything like that today.

Although her impulses mainly manifested in her appetite, I had no doubt that she was leaning towards her vampiric side right now, and there was a need to relieve those impulses.

“Well then, pardon me.”

After saying that, Grace entered the bathhouse. She wasn't in her usual maid outfit, and instead was wearing a swimsuit she had bought in preparation for our trip to the sea.

“Ah, Theo was also in a swimsuit, huh.”

“Hmm. Well, it'll be fine even if it gets wet. I took great pains to get it after all.”

If one planned on going to the sea, then fishing rods, swimsuits, and such items were necessary, so we bought them. From the history I knew of from Earth, I wasn't sure when swimsuits first made their appearance, but in this world, they were sold quite often.

It was also because people interacted with friendly aquatic Monsters like Mermaids and Sirens, to a certain extent. In short, they were called swimsuits...but they were recycled from clothing girls normally wore. It turned out like that since it was easy for humans to use.

It appeared that merfolk had woven these by using the silk

of water spiders. In BFO, if these clothes reached a higher rank, they would gain a fairly high resistance to Water Magic, a protective bubble, and similar traits, but this wasn't something I should hope for right now.

Similarly, I was also wearing a swimsuit at the moment, trunks.

...When I had told her that this was clothing meant to be worn in water, Grace had felt deeply impressed.

I had expected her to enter the bath, wanting to give her swimsuit a try, while dispelling her impulses at the same time.

Grace wore a two-piece swimsuit, and a pareo was wrapped around her waist.

Although her swimsuit wasn't one with a lot of exposure, I knew about the size of her chest, and the addition of her fair, near transparent skin with her pinched waist would be far too tempting.

She also had slender shoulders, a small belly button, smooth legs, and I mean...thinking about this too much would cause me to dig my own grave. She faced my back like before and innocently washed it for me.

“Since we took great pains for this, I’ll go call over Ashley-sama as well. It will be good to enter the bath together like this. It’s also eco-friendly, since the consumption of magic stones will decrease.”

Grace happily said.

What was...going on. Either way, I felt like I was digging my own grave here...

Well, wait a moment. Don’t lose yourself over something like swimsuits. Keep yourself together, me. Isn’t this like going to the pool together?

“Pardon me.”

After being called by Grace, Ashley changed into her swimsuit and entered.

“This swimsuit is cute. I love it.”

“It was something Theo picked out, after all. Please make sure to treasure it.”

“Yes.”

Rather than being chosen by me...I had simply asked for her opinion.

...By the way, Ashley's swimsuit was a one-piece. It had frills from shoulder to shoulder and had quite the modest design.

I was truly glad that I hadn't decided on something too extreme for her.

Interlude 3 – At the Ruined City of the North

In the north laid the Ruined City, Belliondora.

Due to a battle with Demons in the past, the Kingdom's old capital, or more precisely what remained of it, was now in ruins.

The city was burnt down, the earth was hollowed out, and the castle had collapsed.

The only thing left was debris. Accumulated ash and the silent corpses of people, that had long decayed into bones, laid on top.

People had long since stopped traveling to this doomed land, and whenever someone mentioned the name of this city, it was spoken with fear and resentment toward the Demons.

The silhouette of a man could be seen standing in the center of a plaza within the ruined city, which seemed to be bustling with activity.

It was a sharp-eyed, tall man with a fearless face.

You could say that he had an orderly appearance, and if one had to say something about his smile and his face, which was overflowing with confidence, then it would be that he

was probably giving off a fierce impression to others.

“So you’ve come?”

The man muttered and squinted his eyes in satisfaction. Figures slowly began to appear in the ruined city, as if they had responded to the man’s voice. Amongst those people, there were those who had horns growing on violet skin. There were also those who appeared to be identical to humans...but every single one of those who appeared here, including the man, were Demons.

“Youngster, did you call for us?”

“Valross, what are your intentions?”

A voice came from one corner of the ruins. Although this voice seemed dangerous, the Demon referred to as Valross didn’t pay any attention to it. Instead, he closed his eyes and widened his smile.

“It is something urgent.”

“For you to say it like that. I guess it’s a serious matter then?”

“If it is something foolish...you do understand what will happen, don’t you?”

Valross shrugged his shoulders in response.

“Depending on the situation, it might be necessary to change our plans.”

“Why don’t you stop beating around the bush and just say it?”

This time, it was a woman’s voice.

“Not everyone is here yet, right?”

“Do you mean Myustra? That guy probably isn’t interested in attending a meeting like this.”

“Hmm...shall we get to the main subject then?”

Valross paused for a moment. His smile vanished.

“Lynette, who snuck into Termuilles, has ceased regular communication with us.”

The Demons kept silent for a moment, listening to Valross.

“...Who is Lynette?”

A confused Demon asked.

“She was just a young, female Demon who was familiar with the techniques of the humans. We had her sneak into the Large Labyrinth, in the hopes of finding a method to destroy the seal.”

“This is the matter that was important enough for you to summon us? She’s just late, isn’t she?”

“No, she was probably caught by the humans and defeated.”

“That’s correct. It was terrible. I saw her fall to the humans. Her opponent was pretty tough.”

Valross denied their optimistic thoughts, and although he sympathized with Lynette’s defeat, several of the other Demons, including those who spoke of her defeat, looked at each other and laughed. Amongst them were those who had expressed dissatisfaction towards Valross’ summons.

“What, was there something funny?”

“We can’t help but laugh at this. So this is why we were summoned.”

“Geez. She’s probably just a lower class errand runner that dropped dead.”

The ones who said these lines didn’t realize the danger of what Valross had said and laughed. Valross glared at them and shrugged in a displeased manner.

—Those idiots.

He thought.

Although, it was true that, with her combat capabilities, Lynette was probably inferior to the Demons here right now.

Lynette herself was aware that her strength was inferior to theirs, but she refused to bend even a little bit. It seemed that, from their point of view, they did not have a very good impression of Valross.

Speaking of which, Lynette's dislike for Valross might have originated from her pride as a Demon. Conversely, in Valross' case, he had not held a bad evaluation of her.

"You're saying that after Lynette's death, there will be a change in the plan?"

"It's just as I said earlier. That girl was pretty intelligent. She was well versed in the humans' summoning, barrier, and transfer techniques. She was also a necessary talent to open the path to the Moon Shrine."

Lynette's nature was a bit different when compared to the Demons here, who were like incarnations of violence. The combination of her techniques and knowledge made her a

rare and valuable existence. At the very least, if she was compared to these guys, who didn't bother to contemplate the cause of her death, her efficiency was far more useful.

Consequently, Valross had thought highly of her. If someone had held a high opinion of Lynette or had seen her being held in high regard, they might have already arrogantly taken her away.

“What should be done then? If we are unable to enter the Moonlight Shrine, won't our plans be hindered?”

“I will hand over the research results that Lynette sent. If the results are good, we may be able to set up a barrier, to a certain extent. In any case, in regards to the details of Lynette's research, we need a bit more information about the Moonlight Shrine's seal. We probably need to send someone to Termuilles again.”

The reason that Valross had summoned these guys was to select a person to go to Termuilles.

“Yer just bearing the consequences of a young girl, right? Ain't it fine for ya to go yerself?”

The one who said this was one of the members of the group that was dissatisfied with Valross's summoning. His voice held a scornful tone, and those who had laughed at Lynette joined in with some more laughter. However-

“H-Huh!?”

A muffled scream and sounds of breaking stone resounded through the plaza.

The Demon crashed into the ground, his face grasped by Valross, who had rushed at him with an extreme speed. Although Valross wanted to use all of his strength, he settled for a simple movement and concealed his power. Even then, it was enough for fissures to run through the earth.

“Don’t chatter too much, or would you like to be crushed to death?”

Valross threw him to the ground as he spoke. He did this many, many, many times. The Demon’s limbs danced around like he was a doll, and the surrounding land, which had already been somewhat destroyed, caved in and collapsed.

The surrounding Demons, who looked out for themselves, knew why Valross was doing this. He was simply powerful.

The Demon who had his head in Valross' grasp wasn't someone who could endure this. In the beginning, the Demon had somewhat resisted Valross and showed a strong will, but he finally broke down and pleaded with screams, unable to endure any further.

“P-Please, stop it!”

“Keep this in mind, then.”

After throwing the gasping Demon aside, Valross glared at those around him once more.

He had probably intended it as a warning to the others. The guys who had laughed earlier no longer gave off a relaxed atmosphere.

If Valross was acting normally, even he would have been more gentlemanly. He had temporarily been entrusted with the role of mediator. However, he was in somewhat of an irritable mood today, and one of the Demons who harbored ill feelings toward Valross had failed to see that not everything was fine, and even picked a fight with him.

“As far as I know, we still cannot move from here. I’m sure the others are wrapped up in similar situations...so, is anyone free and able to head to Termuilles?”

“Let me go.”

A Demon with burning, red eyes stepped forward.

“...Zevion, huh?”

Valross frowned.

Although he had requested this himself, amongst the people here, Zevion was a combat freak. If Zevion was unable to find any methods to destroy the barrier, he might suggest forcing their way through it. Even if that wasn’t the case, now that Lynette had been defeated, it was uncertain what Zevion would think and what actions he would take.

If possible, Valross would have preferred to leave this job to someone else. However, that didn’t necessarily mean that anyone else would be available to move to another area. It could also be said that only those who were obsessed with battling were free. As long as they volunteered themselves like this, they could probably take care of themselves, to a

certain extent.

“...Will it be fine if I bring that guy along?”

He asked, pointing at the Demon who Valross had caught earlier.

“I don’t really care...but will he be useful to you? That thing.”

“If he submits to someone’s strength, he won’t defy that person ever again, whether it’s you or me.”

“I see?”

Valross smiled wryly, remembering the disgraceful behavior that the Demon from earlier had shown.

Well, combining this combat freak with cunningness could create a suitable balance.

Even if he gave detailed instructions to these Demons, who only abided by strength, he couldn’t imagine them following orders properly. In this sense, Lynette was definitely a talent that was hard to come by.

It was because part of her took action through logic, instead of through emotions.

“Anything else to take note of?”

“Out of the research results that Lynette left behind, the only things that remain are the techniques and tools for sneaking into Termuilles. Please use these to gather information. These tools aren’t something that can be easily prepared, so take care when using them.”

“...Understood.”

“After that, even if we deceive them when we invade the barrier from the outside, once we are inside of the barrier... we can’t deal with several of the barriers that are deep within the Labyrinth or around the Palace. Please pay close attention to this.”

“Very well.”

Zevion put on a fearless smile, grabbed the collar of the still-collapsed Demon, placed him on his shoulder, turned around, and walked away.

Chapter 52 – The Young Women’s Vacation

Eustia and Dominique were singing under the blue sky, and Irmhild was playing a melody with the Lute in her hands. Although it was ordinary music, the melody was refreshing and bright, which suited the scenery well. Today was also a sunny day. The temperature gradually rose, and it was the perfect season to swim in the sea.

On the other hand, it was humid for those who dressed heavily in the Labyrinth. I felt that the temperature inside the Labyrinth stayed the same throughout the years, though it differed depending on the area, so there wouldn’t be any problems if one planned to change clothes before entering the Labyrinth.

After leaving Termuilles, we continued along the coastline in a carriage. The beach was white, and the sky was a transparent blue. The ocean was a bright light-green, often called emerald green, and it was very beautiful.

I took off the canopy of the covered carriage. This carriage had been rented from the stable, in the hopes that everyone would ride it. Although the interior was different from that of the carriage we had originally used, I felt that it was quite spacious, so this carriage wasn’t that bad. We had invited Forest Bird and Rossetta as well, but they seemed to have their hands full with requests and work, so we couldn’t match our plans.

Although it was a bit unfortunate for them, this time around, I was with my party members and those Monster girls.

“It’s beautiful...”

“So the sea...can become this transparent, huh.”

Grace and Ashley looked at the sea as if they were devouring it. Even I thought that the sea looked beautiful, so these were probably the appropriate reactions for these two, who were seeing the sea for the first time. Even though it was just this, I was glad that we could come here.

“By the way, how far are we going? The beach seems to be fine around here.”

“There’s supposed to be a better place that’s just a bit further up.”

Even though Sheila had heard that we would be going to the sea to play, she hadn't shown much of a reaction...but from what I could see, her tail was standing erect, so she appeared to be quite interested. Speaking of Sheila, I had recently found it easier to understand her thoughts by paying attention to her ears and tail, rather than her expression. Well...it was only when she had her guard down or when her mind was wandering, though.

As for myself, I understood the terrain around Termuilles and knew the location of suitable places to play at by the sea. I decided to claim that I had researched it by listening to people in the city, and we were currently in the middle of heading to that location.

The carriage advanced onwards, towards the small peninsula. We changed our direction along the way and proceeded onto a somewhat rocky path in a forest. After the carriage had traveled past the shaded, rocky surface, a natural tunnel appeared. This place was a bit hard to find...but in BFO, this was a hotspot on the outskirts of Termuilles.

"Oh, there it is. It's up ahead, over there."

I had thought about whether we could get there by carriage, since we would be unable to proceed if the carriage's wheels were covered in sand...but it looked like we could go until the end of the tunnel. The tunnel's length was nothing to worry about. It wouldn't take long to reach the exit.

"Wow..."

Ashley exclaimed softly.

"I think I like this atmosphere."

Eustia said after seeing this sight, as if showing her feelings. I didn't think that this place would receive a siren's approval.

The beach and the sea, surrounded by cliffs in three directions, laid beyond the tunnel.

This was what one would call a bay. It was adequately wide and there was abundant sunshine, so it wasn't dark, even though the place was surrounded by cliffs. Due to its mysterious atmosphere, it was a quiet and secretive place.

In the center of the bay, there was a small island, or rather a round rock, staring at you, above the surface of the water. It was perfectly fine to go there if one wanted to fish.

“I’ll go change clothes under that tree over there, then.”

“Ok. Understood.”

It was probably better for me to change my clothes in the shadow of the rocks.

I changed quickly and came back. To begin with, I had prepared the rank 5 Darkness Spell, Dark Field, which spread out a thin barrier and covered a large distance.

The extent of its effect was to reduce Light damage...but it might be able to reduce the effect of UV rays.

Eustia ran towards the sea with a harp in her hands. She was wearing a satisfied smile...which was quite different from her usual, calm appearance. Just as I wondered about whether she would dive into the water, she released her human form and jumped into the sea.

“Ahaha!”

...Well, nothing was better than making them happy. She was literally a fish in the water.

Dominique also released her human form and frolicked around the sea surface. It was a bit different from bathing in the sea, but she appeared to enjoy it.

“Ara ara, everyone ended up releasing their human forms. Well, it’s not like anyone is watching us.”

Irmhild also released her human form as she said that. It looked like she planned on swimming too, and she entered the sea with her half snake body. She wove back and forth and swam skillfully. Although it was naturally my first time seeing a Lamia swim...I didn’t look too carefully at her. As for why, she looked quite a lot like a human...so it would be somewhat problematic no matter where I looked at her.

...The next to follow was Sheila. Wearing an extremely low-rise bikini like that...was it so that her tail wouldn’t get in the way? It couldn’t be helped.

Those two were dangerously attractive...
(TN: raw uses poison to the eyes here 目に毒)

“I want to eat some fish.”

Sheila headed towards the rocky area in the center of the cove, a fishing rod in her hands. She swam like a dog or a cat.

“Theo.”

I looked back towards the person who had called me. Grace and Ashley were walking together. They both had near transparent, white skin.

Under the bright daylight, they looked like they were glittering in the sunshine. It was significantly different when compared to seeing them in the bath. As I had thought, swimsuits were for the sea.

“Can Grace swim?”

She had grown up inside country. How well had she fared when she pulled me out of the waterway after I fell in there? My memories of that time weren’t great, but there was no doubt that she had jumped into the waterway for me.

“I can. Although I’ve never swum in the sea, the waves here appear to be calm. I think I won’t have trouble swimming.”

At the very least, Grace...seemed unconcerned about the water currents. Was it because she was a dhampir, or was it an effect of the ring? Or were, perhaps, vampires in this world not afraid of flowing water? They weren’t particularly good at Water Magic.

There was no doubt that they were weak to sunlight, but in the case of true vampires, every single one of them was strong, so I couldn’t say for sure that they were like this. As for vampires described in the tales on Earth, all kinds of legends were jumbled up together. Speaking of their fear of flowing water, there had been theories that people who had caught rabies were mistaken as vampires who feared water. Either way, as long as Grace was fine with it, then it was alright.

“What about Ashley?”

“I’ve never been swimming.”

Ashley appeared a little nervous.

“I’ll let you get a feel for it in the shallow sections, then. I will also teach you a Magic that’s useful underwater, so you don’t need to worry about drowning.”

“Okay.”

Playing near the shore would help her get better at this. Grace seemed to be a bit worried about me, but I was fine as long as I had my water-breathing spells. As long as I had them, I wouldn’t drown.

//

“Yes, it’s like that. Draw the power out of your body like that. Well done.”

Ashley quickly learned to swim under Grace’s guidance. Even if she had learned how to breathe while swimming, she wouldn’t have much trouble, since it was now possible for her to breathe underwater. As long as she wasn’t anxious about drowning, it was possible that she would even be able to relax.

Grace looked like she had choked on a bit of saltwater, but she originally knew how to swim and immediately got used to it.

I had been drifting along the surface of the water while verifying the use of Underwater Life Magic.

It seemed that Sheila had an excellent catch. As soon as Eustia placed herself on the rock and played her harp, fish started biting. Her tail stood erect, and the corners of her mouth curled up. Simply put, she looked happy.

“...Hmm?”

I had been unconsciously watching everyone as I drifted along in the shallows. After watching Dominique stand on the surface of the water with her toes and fly around, creating whitecaps, I remembered what I was supposed to do. I decided try out a quick experiment.

To start, I stood on the water’s surface using Water Walk, a Spell that allowed one to walk on water. At the same time, I used a Spell that controlled the water currents to act as a driving force.

“Oh.”

I moved forward while tearing up the water. I controlled the spell to turn to the left, then to the right.

...I could do it. If I increased the spell's output a little more, wouldn't I be able to ride on the water and glide around on the ground?

As for how I would proceed with this experiment, if I ran on the beach while using Life Magic to create water at the same time, I could glide above the ground like I intended to.

...That was for practical use, though. It was extremely fun to do. You could even enjoy the sensation of water skiing if you were able to do it at faster speeds. Flying in the sky was another kind of enjoyment.

Everyone looked surprised after watching me.

"That's interesting. I didn't think that a human would do something with water that could make me admire them."

With that, Eustia gave her opinion.

"You're amazing, Theodore-sama!"

"That's right. You seem to be enjoying it."

"Want to give it a try, you two?"

When I invited both of them, who were looking at me with sparkling eyes, they didn't stop nodding. I was acting as a water bike, and we joined hands after I used the water-walking spell.

"Then, are you ready?"

"Yes."

I dashed on the sea's surface with our hands linked, like we were skating on an ice rink. Although the speed was more modest compared to earlier, this still made both of them quite happy.

Hmm... At least I was already using the pretense of training.

In actuality, our main goal was to play. Somehow, I ended up learning a new skill, which I was in the midst of using. From the looks of it, I would even be able to use it in the Labyrinth.

However, I was a little uncertain about who I should pull. Whenever I

accelerated or decelerated, our balance would break a little. I was being modest with my speed, after all. Perhaps it would be better for me to do this on my own, in case I was thrown into an actual battle.

“This is interesting.”

“B-but it kinda tickles the soles of my feet a little.”

They both appeared to feel a different sensation from me, who was acting as a driving force, since they were just being pulled along. Their balance broke and they clung onto my arms while laughing happily. Naturally, they were in their swimsuits. A feeling of softness and warmth spread out on my arms.
...I wanted to praise myself for not losing control of my spell.

Chapter 53 – Irmhild’s Hunting

“Oh, welcome... Wait, it’s you?”

That was the first thing the dwarf boss said after I entered the craftsman’s workshop. It appeared that he remembered me from our previous meeting. ...I had brought in the Sword Boar materials and ordered a variety of strange things, after all. It seemed that my identity as the Demon Killer was immediately found out.

“Good day to you. I’ve come to pick up the things that I ordered.”

“Yeah, they’re all done. Oh, you guys! Hold on a minute.”

After the boss said that, the workshop apprentices brought in the weapons and tools from a room inside the workshop.

“The first one is... a shield. I call it the Felt Shield.”

This was a shield prepared for Ashley. They processed the Sword Boar’s fur into felt, which became the exterior of the shield. If anyone tried holding this, they would notice that it was light, even though it didn’t look like it.
(TN: literally uses exterior armor here)

“This is great. It seems easy to handle.”

“There’s no weight to it, you know.”

After the boss grinned and laughed, he pointed to a spear with a broken speartip with his chin.

“I tried testing it out when it was completed, and that was the result.”

Compared to a light shield made of metal, the Felt shield seemed more solid. We had a lot of materials that were gathered from creatures, so it would be easy to enchant them.

(TN: literally says receives the blessing of an enchant here)

Concerning materials that were related to light and sturdy fabrics, there were various ways to use them. One could create breastplates to protect the upper body, or arm and leg armor to protect those areas. Due to the division of roles

in my party, I had decided to give armor to the person best suited for it.

“Wasn’t it difficult creating the Felt?”

“Well, that’s that. We do have various materials brought into the workshop here in Boundary City, after all.”

The boss said that with a look of pride. He probably had experience in various fields.

“Well then, are the ones over here daggers?”

A pair of daggers had been created from the Sword Boar’s large fangs for Sheila. The thick blades seemed extremely brutal.

“I shaped and sharpened those dagger. I guarantee its durability. It is also considerably sharp.”

The daggers had a good affinity with Aura skills, so it was naturally suited for martial arts. The problem here was Grace’s equipment. Aside from the fact that her axe was a perfect weapon, she herself had the ability to regenerate, so she didn’t value protective equipment much. Based on that, her pinafore dress had been created with the silk of a Luna Worm, at the same shop where I got my coat.

“Now, this was the problematic one.”

The last thing that the boss brought out was a large bow-and-arrow set. The bow, which had decorations attached to parts of it, didn’t look unique. Perhaps it was fitted with magic stones?

There were some specially shaped arrows mixed in with normals ones. Although these were intended to be used by Irmhild, they also doubled as an experiment formed from one of my ideas.

I would feel guilty if the weapon that she had to depend on was terrible, so I prepared a proper bow-and-arrow set for her.

“Anyways, it was pretty tough to make this, since it was the first time that I had ever seen such an order. For the weapons, they are sufficiently accurate, so everything is as ordered...I think.”

Portions of the bowstring were processed from the Sword Boar. Surely, these

were created from the boar's intestines and leather.

"Understood. Afterwards, I'll listen to the user's opinion."

"Alright. Just say anything if you have a problem."

The boss laughed heartily, showing his teeth. Since I brought in the materials, everything turned out to be only 2500 Kilig. Well, we had quite a bit of money to spare, considering our financial situation.

//

I decided to enter the Labyrinth with everyone to do a quick test run of our new weapons. After parking the carriage at the stables, I distributed everyone's weapons and gear.

The breastplate, which had not been handed out earlier due to my indecision, was given to Irmhild, since she used a bow. The arm and leg armor were given to Sheila to use them as a lifeline, since she used a hit-and-run strategy.

"Well then, I tried preparing a bow for you, and I want to hear your opinion on it."

I asked Irmhild after handing her the custom-made weapon. She held the bow in her hand and, after examining it and touching the bowstring, her eyes went wide.

"...Umm, this appears to be a really good item. Is it fine for me to use this?"

"This is a prototype. Won't you try it out to see if you can handle it easily?"

"Try it out?"

"Try drawing the bowstring for me."

Irmhild drew the empty bow with a dubious look. A noise rang out after she released the bowstring.

"This is...?"

"Umm... According to my sources, it appears that, in certain countries, the sound of a fired bowstring is used in ceremonies to exorcise evil spirits. I was wondering if you could do the same, since you can infuse Mana into instruments when performing."

...That country, in other words, was Japan.

Speaking of Meigen no Gi, Kagehisa had seen a Shinto priest strumming bows at a shrine when he was a child. I got this idea for Irmhild, who specializes in string instruments, and thought about testing this idea out.

Although that ceremony was a traditional event... I wondered how it would turn out if a Lamia performed it instead. Well, it truly was an experiment.

(TN: Meigen no Gi is the name of the ceremony)

That said, I had given the dwarf boss a weird request to, if possible, create a bow that had a clear sound when fired. He had looked at us dubiously, and this was probably one of the reasons he remembered us.

Bows were items made from the same wood that was often used in Magic Staves, so it was easy for Mana to pass through them. If the circuits were activated, the inscribed magic stones would help amplify the sound through Wind Magic.

A Kaburaya was needed to perform the Meigen, so I had them prepare arrows that were shaped like a flute. I wouldn't know whether the fired arrows could perform a Cursed Song until we tested it out. If it was useless, then it would be something we could laugh at.

(TN: Kaburaya = whistling arrow)

"Well then, I'll give it a shot."

Irmhild once again drew the bow. Mana was definitely infused into the sound, and it expanded after she fired an arrow. For now, it was going just as planned. I wondered how it would turn out after being used in a real battle later on.

//

After descending into the Twilight Forest, the first thing I decided to do was to let Irmhild fight in like she usually did. I wanted her to show me her archery skills and the behavior of an Adventurer.

Perhaps she realized what I was thinking. She changed into her Lamia form and readied an arrow.

She stood up and, after securing a favorable position with adequate visibility on higher ground, began to attack as she pleased.

Even though there wasn't any Fairy Light, she didn't hesitate. Perhaps she could

see in the dark or was sensing the opponent's position through subtle changes in temperature? Every time she heard leaves rustling in a bush, she shot an arrow towards it.

Although there were many of obstacles around, since it was a forest, her body slithered back and forth, skillfully securing her line of fire.

The arrows that had been shot into the bushes appeared to have hit their targets perfectly. She didn't seem to have too much trouble with the darkness in the Twilight Forest. In addition, she cycled from one arrow to the next abnormally quickly.

She would grab an arrow from the quiver on her back with her tail, fit it into her drawn bow, and then immediately fire two or three arrows. It was similar to having a third arm.

Arrows flew towards the Killer Ants that jumped out of the bushes. Sounds of whistling arrows echoed around us, and the Killer Ants that were hit by the arrows suddenly attacked the nearby Whispermush groups.

The result just now was, perhaps, confusion? Maybe she had infused the effects of a Cursed Song into a normal arrow?

She fired arrows from high places. Even though she was moving and shooting, her upper body was stable and didn't shake. Her accuracy was pretty good, and her senses could precisely grasp the opponent's position. Her skill allowed for high-speed shooting, and her arrows carried additional effects.

...These were quite powerful, weren't they?

When one spoke of Lamias, one would think that they sealed their opponent's movements by coiling around them and sucking out their blood. I had thought that this would be her modus operandi.

Perhaps coming into contact with unorganized Monsters might have been a big risk for her? We should at least watch out for whenever they closed in on her.

"...Although Lamias look like that...they become considerably weakened if they used their skill to change into their human form. She would only be able to put in a small amount of power into her bow as well."

"Uuu."

Perhaps Sheila had guessed what I was thinking, since she mercilessly exposed the truth. Irmhild put on a sad expression. Well, this was necessary

information. In other words, Lamias couldn't show their true strength unless they changed into their true forms. I probably should have let Grace listen to this too.

This was probably why it had been possible for Snakebite to kidnap her. For example, if they had stunned her without making her lose consciousness, she wouldn't have been able to cancel her human transformation, which was a problem.

"Well, I get the fact that you have plenty of strength if you're in your original form. Would you be fine if I prepared a heavier bow for you?"

I felt that there was still some leeway in her bow stance.

(ED: He's probably talking about the draw weight of the bow here.)

"Hmm, if I use my tail, I think I would be able to draw most bows."

I see... Then, should I prepare a trump card for her to use at a critical moment? At the very least, I thought that she was capable enough to go into the Labyrinth with us. While Irmhild suppressed the surrounding Monsters, I picked up a flower that was in one of the bushes.
Even though we took great pains to come to the Twilight Forest last time, only a portion of it had been left untouched.

"This is?"

"Oh, this is used to make Potions. There are various ways to use it, like processing it and then selling it or storing it away for later use. I've been thinking of gathering some from now on, not just stripping materials from monsters."

Everyone looked at each other and nodded.

With that said, my goal was to stock up on a large amount of them to process and sell potions, but either method was fine with me. It was similar to the process of making detergent from the sap of the Sabona Tree, and this was my main goal in coming to the Twilight Forest.

Chapter 54 – Alfred & Talcott

I dashed through the Twilight Forest while using Water Glide. It was as if I was weaving my way through the trees.

A swarm of hornets as large as puppies was headed our way while buzzing loudly.

They were Giga Hornets, abnormally aggressive and territorial insect monsters. They immediately attacked us when we stepped into their territory. They were fairly dangerous, since they were also highly venomous.

I infused Mana into Ouroboros, crossed paths with the hornets that headed towards me, and struck them down. Their nest was up ahead. We had to strike at the source, or this would be endless.

As we got closer to their nest, the hornet swarm got more dense.

(TN: literally says the hornet's density will increase)

“Aqua Wall!”

A Support spell that seemed like one of Ashley's came from behind me. A wall of water rose around me, limiting the direction that the hornets could approach from. Now they could only come at me from in front or behind. I swung my Dragon Staff at them, spinning it as if it were a windmill, and advanced onwards while crushing the approaching hornets like they were chips of wood.

I used the wall of water that Ashley created like this, then pulled myself together and began to manipulate the water to create a path in the air, for the sake of my own convenience.

I got on top of the Water Rail and constructed a Roller Coaster-like track. Without a moment of hesitation, I dashed towards the hanging hornet nest.

“Freeze Jail!”

Although the hornets were still trying to crawl out of it...the entire nest was tightly enclosed in a jail of ice. The honey and larvae sold for a reasonable price, so I wanted the hornet nest to remain intact and collect them.

I swung at the tree that supported the hornet nest, knocking it off and dropping

it to the ground. It flew a large arc before hitting the ground. Although the hornets that had already left the nest remained, they weren't a problem.

“Lightning Cloud!”

Ashley aimed at the surviving hornets that were furiously approaching me and cast a thundercloud at them, killing them all in one swoop.

“Good timing, Ashley.”

“Thank you very much!”

Ashley responded with a smile. Meanwhile, I beautifully struck down a Whispermush that was approaching me like I was swinging a golf club.... We had quite the room to spare. It was a good development.

“Now.”

“Understood!”

Sheila and Irmhild understood each other's movements, so the two of them paired up to fight together. Irmhild complemented Sheila's dagger attacks by shooting arrows at the enemy to block their movements the moment they retreated. Those who dodged the arrows that Irmhild shot would receive a surprise attack from Sheila.

Grace confronted the new monsters.

Among them were the Angrymush. They were giant, pudgy mushroom Monsters that were around my height.

They were different from the Whispermush, and they took the role of vanguard. They were very strong and used a lot of attacks that relied on their constitution and physical strength, so great care had to be taken when it was attacking or was trying to crush you with its own weight. By the way...they tasted like maitake mushrooms. Although there weren't that many of them, they were filling—and one wouldn't feel dissatisfied after eating one.

Although a single blow from an Angrymush's raised arms was enough to smash trees apart, Grace easily avoided its attacks.

“It's slow.”

Although they were the vanguard and excelled in physical strength...they weren't a match for Grace, who could suppress Guardians on her own. She threw the chains attached to her axe at the Angrymush as if she was drawing an arc, which first chained the its feet and robbed it of its movement. She then raised her favorite axe high above her head and drove it into the Angrymush.

“...Umm, can the mushrooms be eaten if they have been cut vertically...?”

“That’s just an old superstition. It doesn’t affect whether we can eat it or not.”

Sheila answered Irmhild, who asked about the properties of the Angrymush. Despite admiring the existence of such a superstitions here, I picked up where Sheila left off.

“Those just now were the Angrymush... Well, they can be eaten. I also considered splitting the Scarletmush vertically, but they’re highly poisonous, so be careful of them.”

It was fine if they easily understood these things. However, it was difficult to distinguish the species of mushroom monsters, so you had to be cautious of them when you reached these floors.

//

Since both the hornets and Angrymush had gathered in large numbers, I was considering what to send home after collecting the spoils from our surroundings. We then found the stele and returned to the shrine.

“Any injuries?”

“I’m fine.”

“Same here.”

After confirming that they were fine and checking today’s loot, an armed group descended to the square from a higher floor of the Shrine. The group had around 30 people, all wearing matching equipment.

It looked like, they were intending to split into parties of six people and enter the Labyrinth. They were lining up to take a roll call.

“They are—the Knights, huh?”

It looked like they were going to form into groups with a Knight as the leader, along with four soldiers and one Healing Magician to support that Knight. After the groups had made their preparations, they formed a line at the Labyrinth entrance and proceeded onwards.

Chester was among them. He briefly looked towards us without saying anything or changing his expression, and then led the soldiers into the Labyrinth.

“The Knights are entering the Labyrinth...?”

Ashley tilted her head as she asked that.

Some type of investigation might have taken place at the Palace. Making the Knights take action made it seem like they had finally gotten their act together. Chester was with them, for some reason. I did not think that it was the Flying Dragon Knights’ turn to enter the Labyrinth.

I headed towards the place where loot was sold, but it seemed that Heather had only heard that the Knights had decided to enter the Labyrinth. Although this reached the ears of the Guild’s higher officials, it seemed that they were ordered to keep quiet about it.

Well...if anything happened and it was my turn to take action, I could get sounded out by King Melvin.

//

“Yo, it’s been a while, Theo-kun.”

“Huh?”

After we returned home and parked our carriage, Prince Albert, who was in disguise as Alfred, got off his carriage.

“Haven’t you heard the story from His Highness, Prince Albert? He said that, since my ambition is to become a Magic Engineer, I should cooperate with you, if you’re fine with it.”

“Oh, I’ve heard about that.”

“Hmm, since it’s like that, I’ll look forward to it.”

He smiled and reached out for a handshake, so I gave him one.

“Besides that...today, I brought a person along who said that he wanted to

talk with you no matter what.”

“Who is it?”

After Alfred knocked on the carriage’s door lightly, a face that I knew well appeared.

“It’s been a while.”

Talcott said, with a wry smile. The air around him was a bit...different from before.

“Yeah, it’s been a while.”

“I caused trouble for you in the past. Father also made a real mess of things, so I wanted to apologize.

Talcott closed his eyes and bowed.

“...Understood.”

Having Talcott thank me and say his apologize...made me feel uneasy.

“...You don’t need to be concerned about my matters. Father only has himself to blame.”

Regardless of his expression, Talcott said such a thing. For him to use this tone—was it because he knew, to some extent, about me being involved with the discovery of the kidnapping incident?

When I made an appearance when I tried to cooperate with the authorities. That information was probably sent to the Palace.

“Is, that so?”

“Yeah. After losing to you, I was warned by a certain someone. I then thought about various things by myself. I will stay myself, though.”

Talcott squinted his eyes and gave a somewhat lonely smile.

“At the very least, if I had no connection to you, my mother and I definitely wouldn’t be able to stay here.”

“I haven’t considered such things, you know. I take action for myself. You don’t need to be thankful.”

That was why, it was all the more unreasonable to receive his gratitude. I thought that he would be fine, since he got himself involved with the Prince. For this reason, he should have thanked Prince Albert.

“If you’re saying this...then the things I do will be for myself. It’s been decided that I’ll receive a punishment if I ever get found in another situation like that.”

It was possible that, as long as he wasn’t involved in another incident, he would strive and work hard for his eldest brother’s sake, huh? Even considering the fact that Morris had punished Talcott, he might have been at odds with his father from the very beginning.

Talcott replied with “Well, it’s like that”, and nodded slightly, and then he spoke to Alfred.

“My story ends here.”

“Are you fine now?”

“Yes, sir. Although I’ll be escorted later, I will remain inside the carriage until Alfred-sama finishes his business, so that I won’t get in your way.”

With that, he placed his hand on his chest and gave a salute. His attitude towards Alfred was one of a noble. Although he had acquired some manners, it seemed that he still couldn’t do it skillfully, as he was forcing it. Rather than that, a person’s behavior and actions didn’t change the honesty of their thoughts, huh? At the very least, I understood that he respected Prince Albert. If the person they served changed, then the servant would change as well, huh.

Although Alfred looked troubled, he seemed to understand these things, so he reluctantly smiled and nodded.

“Understood. Well my business isn’t complicated, nor is it important. Go ahead and wait in the carriage for a bit.”

Chapter 55 – Magician’s Workshop

“Well, I was thinking about renting a house somewhere in the Eastern District and setting up a workshop. I did tell you that I’m aiming to become a Magician, and it will really help me if Theo-kun can cooperate with me during your free time. Of course, I will pay a suitable price that matches your abilities.”

Alfred, who sat across me at the table, said with a serious look on his face.

“In other words, I could help out with things like restoring circuits to their original form by using various Spells, as well as inscribing techniques into magic stones? Afterwards, I would give my suggestions?”

“Hmm, while that’s natural, it’s not like you will be disclosing your secret techniques. It looks like you can use various Spells, so it will really help me if I can receive your advice. If you were to observe my Magic...I might be able to be more careful about controlling it.”

In summary, I would provide assistance with things that he wanted to craft. I had thought for sure that he would suggest creating Magic Tools that would accurately establish a method for controlling Flight Techniques. Even so, I did think that it would become possible for my party members to fight in the air, so even I benefited a bit from what he was saying.

A Magician’s job was to integrate techniques into tools in the form of designs or patterns, and to produce items while puzzling over how to successfully integrate tools and circuits together in order to operate skillfully.

As an example, the bathroom in our house turned out like that thanks to the hands of a Magician. It was arranged so that when a magic stone was set in the fuel tank and Mana passed through it, the technique that was integrated into the pattern would be activated, making it come into contact with the water and boil it.

With this method, magic circuits usually replaced the whole process of a Magician casting a spell into tools.

As a result, there were various ways to utilize goods for human use, like carving a seal that “deciphered” an optimized technique into a tool, drawing a pattern,

and mixing it into an ornament. This simplified the product so that it was not too excessive, or ensured its safety.

(TN: not sure if ornament is proper word here)

With regards to my Magic Circles, they were circles that activated Spells. In other words, they consisted of specialized patterns that utilized human spells. Magicians had a good understanding of inscribing designs that “Deciphered” and “Adjusted” wood as wood, and metal as metal. Being a Magician was a very specialized occupation that required an aesthetic sense and an ability to jump over high hurdles.

“In addition, I have considered experimenting with useful tools for when you enter the Labyrinth. It’s important to make practical use of them. Oh, and I would be glad if you could give me your ideas. Your ideas on flight techniques are different from other people, after all.”

“I’ll at least accept your words of praise. Hmm, you can ask me about anything.”

...Magic tools were expensive too. Since I didn’t have an interest in learning about inscribing various spells into various items and turning them into tools at my leisure, as far as I could see, getting involved with Alfred and letting him produce them was a welcoming thought, because of his honesty.

“Well...besides having you observe me, you will also get to use my nameless Magic tools, and this will both count as training and as advertisement.”

I knew that Prince Albert was trying to spread his name as a Magician to establish his own foothold in society, just like how I had chosen to establish myself in life with the Labyrinth and the use of Spells. Thanks to that, I thought that it wasn’t bad to receive Alfred’s proposition. He could probably make good use of the magic stones and materials that I gathered from the Labyrinth, and maybe I could spend some meaningful days attending class with Ashley.

“Understood. I’ll accept your proposition.”

“Really!?”

After my reply, Alfred’s expression brightened. He then took my hand and

shook it energetically.

“I wonder if you have equipment for creating potions at the workshop? It would help me out if you did have those.”

“I would think that it’s natural to prepare for that, you know! Really, I’m glad!”

With that said, Alfred was pretty excited. Since this negotiation was successful, I felt that Alfred would be in high spirits.

“Did you wrap up your conversation?”

“Yeah.”

Grace asked, and I nodded.

Alfred became serious again then opened his mouth.

“By the way, I want to talk about some information that Prince Albert wanted me to relay to you.”

He said that as if nothing had happened.

“From His Highness?”

“Yes, it’s from His Highness. Didn’t you see the Knights in the Labyrinth?”

“Yeah, we caught sight of them.”

“It seems that they’re searching for sealed doors located in every area. I don’t think they’re being reckless, but if you ever get into a dispute with them, tell me and I’ll pass it on to His Highness. His Highness said that he himself may be unreliable, but he will do what he can.”

In short, he was saying that His Highness would assist me if something happened? There were both pros and cons to involving myself with Prince Albert, though. Well, that was fine.

“What about Sir Chester?”

I did remember seeing Chester amongst the Knights so I tried to ask him about that.

“Hmm, it seems that he volunteered to be in the Labyrinth Exploration group.”

“Volunteered?”

“That’s right. He said that he separated himself from the Flying Dragons unit, and wanted to resume his training. Since he ended up leaving his faction, the united power of Greg’s faction dropped, and there was a bit of confusion amongst the Knights.”

Training, huh. It was clear that he had been influenced by me, since he lost. As for Greg’s faction...it didn’t really matter as long as he didn’t get involved with me.

“Well, that was what I wanted to say. We’ll work out the details next time.”

“Understood.”

“Well now, please excuse me for today. It has become quite warm recently, so please be careful.”

“You too.”

After saying that, Alfred beamed with joy and returned home. It was becoming warmer, huh?

That was right, it was summer. We went to go swim in the ocean before, but in Termuilles, there were four seasons.

It would be good to open the doors and air out our house. Things that were warm were, indeed, warm. I, who had Kagehisa’s memories, longed for air conditioners and electric fans...but that was just asking for the impossible. I had a feeling that it would be quite simple to create something like an electric fan if it was powered by magic stones, though. It wasn’t like it was something that couldn’t exist now.

We could use the bath while we were in the house, so we should just endure this for now.

With that said, I prepared a cold bath for us by filling the bath with water, boiling the water, and letting it cool down.

“Oh, are you going to take a bath?”

“Will you let us join you, if that’s the case?”

“That’s fine, but it’s a cold bath, you know?”

The two nodded happily.

Our bathtub was quite spacious so even if the three of us went in, there was still some room to spare. Today, the tub was probably going to be a substitute for a pool.

Like always, seeing the two of them in swimsuits was enchanting.

Since Termuilles had abundant water, it was possible to enjoy bathing everyday. That was why, rather than saying that I didn't oppose cold baths like these, it was actually normal to cleanse the body with water. As for hot baths, since I took one every day, the two of them had come to enjoy them.

I had also obtained the sap of Sabona Trees, and I had become able to blend that in the perfume they liked to buy. If their mood ever changed, it would be even better.

However, I wouldn't be doing anything in particular for today. As I floated on the water and stared at the ceiling, I zoned out and relaxed.

"The water is cool and it feels nice."

"That's true. Taking a warm bath will make you feel refreshed, though."

That was certainly how I felt.

The two who were beside me floated on the water like me.

Their hair got wet in the water and clung to them. Their lips were the color of wet cherry blossoms, and then there were their semi-transparent, slender shoulders. Their chests rose up and down as they floated sideways.

Seeing such a scene up close was really destructive.

With my rational mind, I would have been really hard on myself if I ended up embracing them like before, so I grabbed their hands instead.

I began to reduce Grace's impulses and did Circulation Refining for Ashley.

"N..."

"P-Phew..."

As they drifted on the water, they both closed their eyes.

Afterwards, they sighed through their small noses in pleasure... Well, I had a feeling that they got aroused, instead...

For a while, it was just the sound of their breathing and the water. Our connected hands became warmer. The time passed quietly.

Chapter 56 – Knights and Adventurers

“Hey, hey! Don’t think you can look down on us just ‘cause yer a Knight!”

We were waiting to exchange the materials we had gathered in the Twilight Forest for money at the Guild when we heard an angry voice ring out. Everyone who looked over could see a group of Adventurers and a party of Knights glaring angrily at each other.

...Or should I say, this was expected? There seemed to be some sort of conflict brewing between the Adventurers and the Knights.

The things that Adventurers and Knights respected, freedom and laws, contradicted each other after all. I had expected that some kind of trouble would show up after the Knights came into the Labyrinth.

“It’s not very peaceful. What’s up, you guys?”

When another adventurer asked, one member of the other Adventurer group angrily responded.

“Everybody...said that, if we had gone into the Labyrinth, we should go over there so that they can investigate us! There have been complaints about this since we left the Labyrinth!”

“Well, hold on a moment. We just said that it would be troublesome if you guys approach us too much while we’re in the middle of training for the Labyrinth Search. We also have a mission to carry out. We can’t talk about it or reveal the contents of our training to outsiders.”

Their mission. It seemed different, but this was about those sealed doors, huh?

Although Alfred had spoken of it as well, perhaps their goal was those unopenable doors with attached emblems, which had originally been intended to connect to unimplemented areas. Of course, I was referring to BFO.

“Huh? Are you trying to say that we’re snooping around? Despite coming after us, you want us to hand over a map and take you guys lower. So shameless!”

"We aren't the ones who said that. We have a different purpose from those guys."

The Adventurer turned red at that statement, and the young Knight who was facing him revealed some discomfort in his voice.

I didn't understand his expression. He turned his back to me and only raised his visor.

"Hah! What about it!"

"What did you say...?"

So it was like that. It didn't mean that I could tell who was right just from looking at them, though. Things did appear to be being stirred up from the Adventurer's side this time.

Rather than that...reaching certain floors with maps, huh. Were there guys who could make such things?

"The pretext for dispatching the Knights is to train soldiers. That's why such a incident wouldn't happen. If such a thing did happen, it would probably be because of Greg's faction. I heard that after his influence weakened, he sent some of his underlings into the Labyrinth."

Sheila provided some helpful context.

"...So, that means that Greg is at the castle, in person, as part of the Flying Dragons?"

"Looks like it."

They were there under the pretext of training. From the developments on the Knight's side, even if I had thought that they were up to something in the Labyrinth, they were making such a thing official.

If the smell of money spread somewhere, people would come search for it, huh.

There was Greg's faction, too.... Even making maps and reaching certain floors were the fruits of an Adventurer's hard labor. If his faction demanded these to be handed over, it would probably provoke their anger.

The Adventurers had close connections with each other. If someone followed their example, then everyone with eyes would understand and immediately spread bad rumors.

Greg's group had probably rushed to earn some achievements because they had realized the danger of letting their influence drop, but they provoked the Adventurers by doing this. The one who had always looked down upon the Knight's reputation was, in fact, Greg. Nevertheless, he had projected this onto everyone else.

"I'm sorry, Theodore-san. Please wait for a moment."

"...Understood."

Heather, realizing that things were getting heated, appeared.

"Please calm down. It will be troublesome if there is a fight here."

Heather began to mediate fearlessly. An Adventurer Guild receptionist like her would not be suited for the job if she hesitated at all at such a scene. Heather was...somewhat of a hardworking, popular character. Even though she was a careless person with a lot of work and was unable to take breaks, she did her job in a positive manner, and did it flawlessly. I felt that she would become even busier as her superiors began to rely on her.

"Well then, what are you saying we should do?"

"There has been a misunderstanding between you guys. Instead of making it clear who is right or wrong here and creating a breeding ground for future problems, those who strive to prevent situations like these from happening again in the future will—"

I thought that Heather's argument...was correct to a certain degree. This time, from my impression of these two and just from listening to their argument, it seemed that they would end up causing trouble around here. Both sides would have an endless dispute with each other because both of them were speaking their mind, and since they relied on their ego, a conclusion would never be reached without a Magic Trial, even if they were interrogated.

"Hey! You, whose side are you on anyway!?"

...Although that was my train of thought, it appeared that the one on the Adventurer's side didn't think so. Even though that guy's expression showed that he had expected to have Heather as an ally, he was enraged by her words and, after interrupting her, vigorously rushed towards her like he was going to

grab her.

I decided that I should probably help Heather out here. One way or another, she was the acquaintance I had known the longest amongst the Guild staff. She accommodated us on various things and she was always in charge whenever we came here.

I moved towards the adventurers and entered their line of sight in a single leap. I drew their attention as planned, and I saw the adventurer frown at the sight of my face.

“...The Demon Killer. Aren’t ya quite arrogant when yer just a newcomer? I think ya should lower your head to yer senior?”

“...If that’s the case, would it be better if I side with the Knights who were doing research and training here earlier?”

If he was going to dispute over who had gotten there first, that that’s what I had to say about it. The Labyrinth didn’t belong to him, and I had no interesting in respecting this guy as my senior.

“What did ya say to me?”

“Hey, Jasper. Look around you...”

“Shut the hell up! Do I need to be afraid of my opponent just ‘cause he is a Demon Killer!?”

The man called Jasper swung his hands around, as if he were shaking me off, and spit was spraying out of his mouth as he yelled at me.

Even his companions, who had gotten worked up over this, ended up arguing with him. From his standpoint, he was justifying being at the Labyrinth first with words like “because we are adventurers,” instead of using reason. It appeared to be that sort of territorial mentality and group behavior.

“...Well, I apologize. I’ve learned about the misconduct that happened here. I have also received these fellows’ warnings. I apologize for our behaviour, which was apparently due to a misunderstanding.”

Although the Knight had only had his helmet visor raised, this time he took his helmet off and bowed.

I didn’t know who this person was after they had turned their back to me

earlier, but they appeared to be a female Knight. Her voice was a bit husky and she was tall. Her outfit was hard to understand, since she was wearing a helmet and a surcoat.

“Yer too late to be apologizin’!”

“Jasper!”

“Shaddup!”

After being strongly warned by his companion, Jasper glared at his surrounding. Whether or not he had realized the fact that he didn’t have any allies, Jasper clicked his tongue, stomped on the ground, and hurriedly left.

“...You saved me, Theodore-san.”

“Well, it’s normal to do that, since Heather-san is always taking care of us.”

“If you say so. Haaah.”

Heather seemed to be a bit depressed, regardless of the outcome of her intervention.

She probably thought that solving these types of problems was part of her job as well.

“...I’m very sorry for the disturbance that occurred. We haven’t gotten used to the Labyrinth and don’t have the time for it. I’m called Mercedia Corbett.”

The Knight, Mercedia, bowed to the Adventurers.

“...No, we were also at fault. Certainly, I admit that we should have been trying to get along with the other groups.”

The remaining members of the Adventurer group relayed their gratitude to Mercedia and left. Well, besides Jasper, which was expected. Depending on the circumstances, Jasper could separate himself from that Adventurer group. I didn’t feel that this would be my responsibility until that happened, and Heather appeared to think similarly.

“I’m sorry for taking up your guys’ time as well. It made it seem like you forced your way through this. Although I may not have the authority to say this, I’ll take some preventative measure so that problems with the Knights won’t happen again.”

"You helped out with this though. That man called Jasper got angry because of his face rather than his reason, didn't he? And for the Knight's side, instead of being your problem, it's a problem related to Greg's faction, right?"

"...No, well, that may be the case."

Mercedia scratched her head in response, as if she were troubled. Perhaps it was difficult for a someone who worked for the court like her to answer that.

Chapter 57 – The Hidden Circumstances of Greg’s Faction

The dispute between the Knight and Adventurer groups was a little bit worse than it seemed.

I put off the Adventurer’s Guild for now. After tidying up the equipment and loot that we got from the Labyrinth, we returned to our house and relaxed for a while, until a guest appeared.

“My name is Viola, it’s nice to meet you. Is this the residence of Theodore Gartner-san?”

A dwarf woman greeted me with a bright smile. Although her gaze was level with mine, she was a proper adult.

“Yes, I’m Theodore.”

“Well, I’ve come here as Alfred-sama’s messenger. He said that he wanted you to come and see the workshop at least once.”

“Oh? The workshop has been completed already?”

“That’s still being renovated, but the Potion Room is already finished.”

“Hmm, shall I go check it out for a bit then?”

I gathered all the necessary materials. I had thought about buying lots of equipment for mixing potions on the days when I didn’t enter the Labyrinth, but then Alfred said that he was going to prepare a workshop.

“With that said, I’ll be heading out. What are everyone’s plans?”

I asked everyone in the house.

“I have to prepare tonight’s dinner. Will you return before then?”

Grace tilted her head slightly as she asked.

Well, she had already decided on it. Grace’s food was always delicious. I wouldn’t call her cooking crude like the Kushiyaki bought at food stalls and Kaiyaki.

(TN: Kushiyaki: grilling meat and skewering it, and Kaiyaki: cooking shellfish in

shells)

“Yeah, I’ll definitely return.”

“Okay.”

Grace happily smiled at my reply.

“What about Ashley?”

“Rosetta-sensei said that she’ll be coming over. I promised Sheila-san that we would train in the courtyard until then.”

“You’re still working hard, even after going to the Labyrinth...”

“I’m in great shape thanks to Theodore-sama.”

Was this a result of the Circulation Refining or from leveling up in the Labyrinth? Ashley’s condition was fine right now. She had used healing spells to restore her endurance, and I felt that she had become quite diligent in her studies and training. Speaking of her training, she had been doing kumite, which was actually used for combat.

Although they wore defensive gear and struck each other using light wooden sticks wrapped in cloth, the training should be suitable, since her opponents were either Rosetta or Sheila. Grace looked sad because she couldn’t join in on their kumite, since it was too difficult for Grace to properly adjust her power.
(TL: Kumite is grappling)

“It has been quite interesting lately, so I can’t let my guard down. You’re now able to ready my next move and meet my attacks head on.”

Sheila said as she listened to Irmhild’s lute. Irmhild was cooling herself off near a tub that stood on some ice pillars, which were created for that purpose. It was a big deal if Ashley was able to keep up with Sheila’s movements to some extent.

As far as I was concerned, it was likely that Irmhild would spend some time here in the house before returning to the Western District, since Sheila was training with Ashley.

Since that was the case, perhaps I should go there for a bit. Maybe it’s better to ask Alfred about the matter regarding the Knights and the Adventurers, too.

//

“Thank you for waiting.”

After Viola put the necessary luggage into the carriage, we headed towards Alfred's workshop.

“Viola-san, what do you do at the workshop?”

“Me? I do various things like smithing and sewing. Just when I was trying to become independent from Master, Young Master Alfred called for me and asked whether I could work at his Magician's Workshop.”

As she said that, Viola rolled up her sleeves and looked at me. I see. So she was a retainer blacksmith under the Magician's Workshop? Moreover, if she could process metal or leather, she could probably create various things. It appeared that Prince Albert was steadily continuing his preparations.

“If that's the case, I wonder if I should address you as my colleague.”

“Definitely! I look forward to working with you from now on!”

In my case, I felt like a test pilot that got involved with this because of my Control.

Alfred's Workshop was in the Eastern District. It was close to both the school and my house. The house was on a large plot of land. It seemed that it was still under renovation, since construction materials were piled up in the courtyard. Alfred was also in the courtyard with a woman, and he was eagerly explaining many things to her. He smiled broadly at me, and then at Viola, as I got off the carriage and we approached him.

“Yo, I've been waiting for you. Welcome to the Brightwelt Workshop.”

“Hey.”

“The woman beside me is my friend, Feela.”

“Nice to meet you.”

Alfred greeted me in high spirits and introduced the lady beside him to me. The girl, Feela, grabbed the hem of her skirt as she greeted me.... Well, if I were

to make a conclusion, she was probably Ophelia in disguise. She was wearing a ring that matched Alfred's, which was used for concealment. Either way, the Brightwelt name appeared here.

"Well, my life has been a bit messy. Since I've been busy recently, I have been unable to continue preparing the workshop, but the end is finally in sight. Several facilities are still under renovation, but the smithery and the pharmacy are ready. I wonder if you can try it out and give me your impressions."

Perhaps the Palace had been really busy searching for and translating ancient documents. Alfred would have been forced to halt his progress because of work related to that, and would have been stressed as well.

Alfred led us to one of the rooms in the residence.

Scales, mortar and pestles, glass bottles, a cauldron on top of a stove, display shelves, and other necessary equipment were assembled in the room.

"Well then, I'll start using them immediately. Will you be watching me work?"

"Will that be fine? Isn't your work considered a secret?"

"No. Even if you know the recipe, you would have to secure the supply of materials. Also, it's difficult to learn recipes just by watching others."

The magical process involving potions was performed using Magic Circles, so there was no need to listen to chants and imitate them. I could gather the raw materials for potion ingredients on my own in the Labyrinth. My sales route ended by bringing these to the Adventurer's Guild. If I did not need to sell them, I could use them myself. It was easy for me.

Well, for potions... There was a wide variety of them, such as Healing Potions for healing wounds, Magic Potions for restoring mana, which would be on the top of my list, Physical Potions that restore your stamina, and Resist Potions, which were effective against other Spells.

Depending on the kind of potion, the process will be time-consuming. Even though it would be difficult to raise the quality, the biggest problem would probably be gathering the necessary ingredients in the recipe for brewing them.

On that point, I had known some potion recipes from the beginning, and even though I only gathered herbs at the Twilight Forest, I was able to create several kinds of potions.

Although my class wasn't related to production, since I would be able to procure items locally in order to brew these potions myself, it would be convenient to memorize the recipes and learn the minimum skills required.

Now then, from the several kinds of potions that existed, I could make a number of them... but above all, the ones that I thought would be most profitable were Magic Potions.

Although I had done research on these before, they were not often sold often on the market. Few recipes were available, probably because the people who could do this kind of work were limited to those who could mix Potions.

After putting the herbs we picked and the other materials that we bought into the mortar, in the proportions that I had decided on, I began to grind them. At this time, it was necessary to knead a sufficient amount of Mana into the materials in this mixing technique. If this couldn't be done, an appropriate amount of powdered magic stone chips needed to be prepared and then ground together with the materials... but if this was done, the material costs would rise and the amount of profit would fall.

Due to that, the demand and cost for magic potions were almost the same, so it wasn't really profitable to make them..

"He can use Magic Circles at such a young age?"

"Yeah, he's the rumoured Demon Killer, you know."

"Eeeh."

Viola looked at me in amazement.

While that was being said, I finished my preparations. After putting them in pure water, then boiling them down on the stove, a change would occur to its appearance.

Since I felt that today was going to be a test drive, the amount was less than I would normally use in a large cauldron.

I remained on standby after placing a small cauldron over the fire. Since nothing unusual happened while I was watching it, just in case it started to boil over, I thought about talking to Alfred about the Knights.

//

"I see. There was a conflict between them?"

Alfred scratched his head with a troubled look.

“There were problems with the Adventurers who caused trouble as well. Thanks to Greg’s faction, there was a foundation that made it so the Knights couldn’t be treated favorably as a whole. Although Lady Mercedia said that she would try to take preventive measures so that it wouldn’t happen again, I think that more problems will occur. It seemed unreasonable to have her step into this.”

Even if Greg became useless, he was still a vice captain of the Knights. Mercedia probably served under him.

“That may be the case. Was putting pressure on the Adventurers effective?”

“If some kind of notification was handed out by the Adventurer’s Guild, I think that it would keep them from acting too rashly. They’ve given their thanks to the Knights, so I don’t think that anyone would want to deliberately stir up trouble with the Knights.”

If I were to talk about Mercedia, then I would describe her as an honest person.

Rather than taking the trouble to return to the Adventurer’s Guild to talk about it and stir up trouble within the Labyrinth, I thought that it was easier to reach a peaceful conclusion if the Guild discussed it in public.

That troublesome fellow called Jasper, made use of the Adventurer’s anger, put the blame for his mistakes onto them, and tried to force his way out.

That was why, on top of the large incident that happened because of his face, I watched him try to retreat when the winds turned against him.

“Greg has been in a hurry ever since Sir Chester left him.”

“Was Sir Chester that important to him? Even if he said that he was talented in several areas, Sir Chester is a common Knight, right?”

“In his case, what’s important are Sir Chester’s connections. Sir Chester is favored by Her Highness Rosemary.”

“...Umm, that’s the second Princess, right?”

“Right. The Princess Rosemary. Sir Chester had curried favour through the princess, which was why he was able to go into the Labyrinth. The Princess

seemed to have no use for Greg by himself. She has been refusing visitors recently, you know. The Nobles that follow are basically waiting for opportunities.”

Haah, that was a critical problem. Although Chester struck at me with the problem of vested rights, Chester himself ended up defecting and, unfortunately, caused his chief support to waver.

“So, Greg wants to earn achievements in the Labyrinth in order to prove himself?”

“Well, yeah. He lacks the idol image, and don’t you think that he will try to teach another Protege Knight to become a good Hero?”

Although Alfred said that with a smile, his smile suddenly vanished and was replaced with a serious look as he said,

“...Hmm. I’d like to apologize to you now.”

“About what?”

“I’ll at least inform His Highness Albert about this. Her Highness Rosemary and Greg have a somewhat poor compatibility with His Highness Albert.”

“Oh.”

In other words, Rosemary and Prince Albert didn’t have a good relationship. It was because Prince Albert’s own influence in the Palace was weak. It wasn’t like trouble would come flying his way, and like myself, it wasn’t like the Prince was personally involved with this. Therefore, it was hard for a direct confrontation to happen.

“This time, I’m just sharing information. Wouldn’t the situation improve just by having the Guild send out a warning to the Adventurers?”

It seemed that the potions had been completed as we were talking. After removing the cauldron from the fire, a liquid with a deep violet color formed. Once I cooled this down and divide it into small bottles, they definitely wouldn’t be inferior to the Magic Potions on the market.

“Looks like it turned out fine. I think we should try to increase the production of these, as well as Healing Potions, for storage or for selling.”

Since there was a lot of supply and demand for Healing Potions, it wasn't like I would be introducing them into the market to generate income. If I were to store them for later... they would be useful in times of need.

Chapter 58 – Knight’s Apprentice

“Now!”

Sheila brandished her daggers in a cross-like movement and cut up the Angrymush as she pleased. She then jumped backwards and let out a yell. Ashley activated her spell after making sure Sheila had retreated

“Water Cutter!”

The Angrymush, which tried to chase after Sheila, was hit by a blade of water. Although the water blade did not quite cut through it or send it flying, it left a deep wound on its body.

Irmhild immediately pursued the Angrymush. It was likely that she had been shooting arrows at various Monsters to keep them in check, but she had actually switched positions with Sheila without the monsters noticing. Her tail powerfully swept in from the side and cut off its feet. As soon as the Angrymush fell over, Caduceus extended from Ashley’s shadow and impaled it relentlessly.

“I can’t lose here either.”

Grace was engaged in a fight with a giant tree, the Evil Willow. They were willow tree Monsters with human-like faces, formed from the bumps and holes on its trunk. When someone approached it, it would swing its branches like a whip to attack. Maintaining one’s distance was not an advantage either, as the Evil Willow had sharp, blade-like leaves that could be thrown like shurikens. If one was preoccupied with the leaves, it could use its roots to entangle one’s feet and seal their movements before sweeping out their feet, making it quite a dangerous fellow.

The tree attacked with its branches, but they were torn to pieces before they reached Grace. I thought that Grace’s axe handling had become even more skillful. She swung the massive axe with both hands, like it was a toy, and crushed the branches upon impact.

Although the Willow tried to resist by swinging its branches and leaves around, it was unable to stop the girl, who leisurely advanced towards it. After she

closed the distance, she held the axe, cloaked in Aura, above her head and split the Willow apart with a single blow.

“Fuu.”

Grace let out a sigh. It seemed that she still had some room to spare, given her expression.

I lured a pack of 20 Grey Wolves together by myself. They were highly intelligent. Although the level of danger depended on the nature and ability of the Alpha Wolf, the pack’s boss, the wolves in the Labyrinth didn’t really care about losses, so one needed to be careful, as they wouldn’t retreat even if they were injured.

I situated myself on a water ball via Water-Walk. This water ball would allow me to move around. With it acting as my foothold, it was possible to freely control the distance between the Wolves and me as long as I maintained my posture, even if they ambushed me. The wolves jumped me from all directions, with staggered timing. I spun my Dragon Staff at the wolves, sweeping them up, launching them into the air, and blowing them away.

“Now then—”

After I had routed most of the wolves, only the Alpha wolf remained. It was much larger than the rest. It glared at me and let out an angry howl. The Alpha Wolf jumped in a zigzag pattern in an attempt to distract me while it chased me.

Just as it entered my range, I aimed the water ball at the boss and shot it with my Dragon Staff, using a scooping movement. After I separated myself from the wolf, I attacked the wolf from all sides with Aqua Whip, a rank five Water spell.

It was impossible for the boss wolf to flee, since I could wield the water whip with precise control. Even though it tried to pursue me, it was suppressed by the whip I held. The whip froze the part of the wolf’s body it made contact with, and the wolf’s body was gradually frozen in this manner. The whip mercilessly cut into the wolf’s body, similar to a glacier carving out the ground, and tore a hole into it.

“This has a nice feeling to it. It also leaves no openings against a coordinated assault either.”

My understanding of the Staff's movement had probably deepened, compared to before. I had become able to deal with various situations in a flexible manner.

However, I still had a ways to go. I needed to steadily accumulate more battle experience against Monsters and build up my strength.

"You guys, why are you all whining!?"

After we had finished stripping the materials off the monsters and gathered herbs as per usual, I found Chester scolding his subordinates at the Labyrinth Entrance plaza.

"Well, um, Sir Chester. Why are we taking the sewer route? The other guys are heading towards other areas. Besides...isn't THAT beyond the sewers?"

His subordinates looked at him with upturned eyes and asked nervously. THAT which lay beyond the sewers was, in other words, the Large Corrupted Lake.

I could understand the subordinates wanting to avoid the Large Corrupted Lake. It was somewhere even I didn't want to go to.

I couldn't believe it but...did Chester intend to go there...?

"So what if it's the Large Corrupted Lake. We are retainers who serve our glorious Kingdom. Just because others won't enter that place, doesn't mean we won't!"

So that was how it was. He was saying that he would continue to complete tasks that people hated.

Knighthood was fine and all, but wouldn't it be better to come up with a countermeasure before invading the Large Corrupted Lake? It was difficult to reach the end of the area with just chivalry and spirit alone. On top of that, they had to investigate the area.

I believed that if one wished to enter the Large Corrupted Lake, they should at least gather information beforehand

"What's wrong, Sir Chester? You're still losing your temper."

Another Knight called out to Chester's group after approaching them.

"Fernand.... It's you, huh? It's just something those guys aren't thinking

about."

He seemed to be Chester's acquaintance. The youth named Fernand put on a smile.

"I've heard that there are a lot of groups who were having difficulty with the Labyrinth Search, since they're not used to it. You would do well to stay calm as you proceed."

"... That's right"

Chester slightly knitted his eyebrows.

"Besides that, Sir Chester. Sir Greg and Her Highness Rosemary are worried about you, you know? How about returning to the Palace now?"

"I am thankful that they are worried about this retainer. I understand that my strength is imperfect and I still have a ways to go. I have no interest in returning to the Flying Dragons unit."

After Chester declared that, Fernand shrugged his shoulders.

"Either way.... Your resolution appears to be firm."

"Knights never go back on their words. Didn't you volunteer for the Labyrinth Search as well?"

"Even if I go into the Labyrinth, I'll still show up at the Palace from time to time. Look, even if you won't return to the Flying Dragon unit, won't you at least show yourself to Her Highness Rosemary?"

"...It's impossible. My determination will weaken."

"Is that so?"

Fernand gave up on persuading Chester to return..

"Well then, we will head off on another Labyrinth Search."

"Yeah, may the fortunes of battle be with you."

"Same to you."

Chester disappeared into the Labyrinth via the stele with his doubtful, dispirited subordinates.

Fernand, who remained behind, wore a slight smile...and headed outside of the Shrine and vanished.

...Fernand, huh? He mentioned Greg and Rosemary, so he might be Greg's apprentice.

Now that you mention it, from the atmosphere, it seems that Greg selected Fernand to be Chester's replacement.

"...That person from earlier appeared to be quite happy about something."

With that, Ashley tilted her head and knitted her brows questioningly. Hmm, I should look into this properly.

Chester himself probably wasn't aware of Greg's decline. Considering Fernand, I felt that a chance might unexpectedly appear if Chester degraded in status and became his rival.

"Oh, found Theodore-kun."

The Forest Birds appeared and called out to us.

"Hey there."

"Yes, hello."

Lucian and Irmhild exchanged bows with a smile. Speaking of which, rather than getting along, those two appeared to have good compatibility with each other?

The atmosphere between them had not changed since their first meeting. Since it was a warm and pleasant feeling, even I felt at ease.

"Did your search go smoothly?"

"Yeah. Although Rock Turtles took up some of our time, it's already like this. I was astonished by how pleasant it felt when I was beating them up with this."

Fitz easily lifted a sturdy Warhammer onto his shoulder.

Rock Turtles were turtle Monsters with stone shells that appeared in the Old Mine Path. Although their movements weren't quick, one had to be careful of a surprise attack, since they could camouflage themselves.

Although Fitz had previously used a sword, just like Robin, it appeared that they had bought new weapons that were more appropriate against the Monsters in

the Mine. Upon closer observation, their armor and other weapons appeared to be new as well. It seemed that their earnings had been satisfactory.

“We’re about to have lunch now though. How about we eat it together?”

“Ohh? What about the Labyrinth Search?”

Forest Bird always seemed to do their Labyrinth Search in the afternoon.

“The time limit for the request to collect minerals was really terrible you know. We’ve been working very hard these past few days.”

That was a request that was put up at the Adventurer’s Guild.

“Then, since we couldn’t play with you guys before, shall we go and eat somewhere to make up for that?”

“Now you’re talking! I know of a good store.”

With that said, we went up the spiral passageway that led to the top of the Shrine, and I passed by more people I knew along the way.

Umm, they were the guys who had a dispute with the Knights. It wasn’t just them either, I even recognised faces from the Labyrinth Entrance and the lobby of the Adventurer’s Guild.

Perhaps I had gotten used to living in Termuilles. Although that was fine and all, Jasper was not among them.

Chapter 59 – Research Development

“Robin, isn’t this Fangworm meat?”

“Hmm? Yeah. It’s crunchy and delicious, and it goes well with ale.”

He said that so casually. His food didn’t look any different from what everyone else was normally cooking and eating.

Perhaps this food culture was normal to him, but even I was cautious about such things every once in awhile. In a way, I was similar to a guy who hated Shako. Fangworms were monsters that looked like giant worms with fangs. Frankly speaking, they didn’t look very appetizing, and it was a bit of a bottleneck for me that I didn’t understand their classification well.

Whether or not he was telling the truth, it tasted like shellfish. Truthfully, I wondered grouping them into the same category as land-dwelling shellfish would make me less repulsed towards Fangworms.

(TLC note: Shako is a species of Mantis shrimp)

“Theo-kun, do you dislike worms?”

“Well, I hate them, though I’ve never tried one yet.”

It was possible to cook Monsters in BFO as well, but most refrained from eating worms.

...In this case, however, I wanted to try it as a challenge to myself. Determined, I put a piece of boiled Worm meat into my mouth... It was certainly delicious and it even had a good texture.

The Worm’s name made me think of it as a monster belonging to a class of insects but, as I had thought, it tasted like shellfish.

“Hmm, surprisingly, it’s not bad.”

“Right? It’s especially delicious at this shop.”

It was already noon when Forest Bird brought us to a shop, which was rather lively with customers that had already entered. The shop appeared to be thriving.

“By the way, I heard you took down a guardian.”

“Actually, it wasn’t me, but Grace who did that.”

Interest peaked among the Forest Bird members and they shifted their attention onto Grace, who blushed in embarrassment.

“I knew that Grace-san was amazing.”

“Doesn’t Ashley-sama also dive into the Labyrinth with you? It seems that Ashley-sama will develop into someone amazing as well.”

“Yeah, you can really see that she has grown after going down there.”

“N-no, I still have a long way to go.”

“Are you comparing yourself to Theo-kun and Grace-san?”

The Forest Bird members exchanged wry smiles with one another.

“What happened to the Guardian?”

“I have plans to turn him into equipment...as well as bacon and jerky.”

I explained my plans for the Sword Boar to them while Sheila was cleanly picking out the bones from her fish. Since Boar meat was nutritious, I intended to preserve it and bring it as emergency rations for our trips into the Labyrinth.

“Should I set some aside for you?”

“Although I am curious about the taste, I can’t accept something so valuable.”

Fitz smiled wryly and waved him off.

“Eh, Irmhild-san is a Lamia?”

“Yeah, that’s correct.”

Not only was she found out, she answered truthfully and didn’t even try to hide that fact, now that she had support behind her. Monica smiled after Irmhild’s answer, but the tension among the Forest Bird members rose a little.

“Even though this is my first time meeting one, I wouldn’t have realized it if you hadn’t told me.”

“I am able to eat regular meals, and although it’s not entirely pointless, I can’t really eat too much.”

Irmhild said as she cut the bird meat into little pieces.

Based on what she had said, she would gradually get weaker if she only drank blood occasionally and didn't eat any meals. Perhaps because she was a Lamia, her consumption and absorption of regular meals was bad.

"In the past, my human transformation technique was dispelled if I were to endure it for too long, which was very problematic."

"The Director and I discovered that."

Sheila supplemented Irmhild's words with her own.

So the Orphanage Director already knew about Irmhild's identity?

It seems that the way she was now was due to the protection of the Director and Sheila.

"Fufu, I've known Sheila-chan for a long time now."

"Yeah."

Sheila nodded deeply. Although we hadn't had lunch with Forest Bird for a while, the atmosphere was quite peaceful, from beginning to end.

Now then, since I did have plans to make an appearance at the workshop later on, perhaps should I tell Alfred about Forest Bird while I was there? Of course, that was if Forest Bird was fine with it.

I was close with the Forest Bird members and they would eventually learn about the Brightwelt Workshop anyway, but I thought that their impressions would differ depending on whether or not they were told from the start.

//

"Heeh, such an interesting bunch of adventurers is out there, huh?"

After receiving Forest Bird's genial consent, I told Alfred about them, without revealing any names, while brewing potions. Just as I expected, he showed signs of interest.

"Well, how should I say this...to put it kindly, they're your typical Adventurers, and because of that, I thought that perhaps it'd be interesting to hear their opinions as well."

"Hmm...That's fine. Thanks for telling me about those Adventurers."

Aside from the customers who ordered tools from the workshop and the prototype Monitor, it would be appreciated if outsiders, besides myself, were able to see the items here.

Although Alfred cheerfully smiled, his expression quickly became clouded, and he said,

“I’m sorry, but even though you’ve brought me such a fine story, I was just notified of something terrible.”

“What was it? How sudden.”

“Well, It’s about Greg.”

Alfred didn’t articulate himself very well.

“Has he done something again?”

“Yeah, Miss Mercedia and His Highness Prince Albert gave me the news. It seems that Greg’s matter was reported to the higher ups. It also appears that he complained about it. It should be beneficial for the Adventurers, too.”

Alfred smiled sarcastically as I blinked at him.

“According to Greg, the Adventurers were dissatisfied about the meager profits, you know?”

“In short, they’re saying that the problem can be settled with money?”

“That’s right. The Kingdom, which makes a profit from the Labyrinth, is keeping silent, since it doesn’t want to make its relationship with the Guild and the Adventurers that come with the Labyrinth worse. There’s no doubt that it’s trying to preserve its friendly relations with them. Didn’t you know that even the Nobles used to be Adventurers? That’s why they were supporting the Adventurers, too. Surprisingly, there was a lot of unexpected opinions on whether it was better to compile a strict budget, including extra money to pay for their silence, or to hire Adventurers and make them local guides.”

“Hmm. At the very least, the matter about the Sealed Doors is still a secret, correct?”

“It is for now. It’s not like the Labyrinth will close down, but it appears that His Majesty considered taking the secret of the doors’ existence to his grave.”

In short, unless the details regarding what was beyond those doors and the matter involving the Moonlight Shrine and the Demons were reported as information, then there shouldn't be any problems, even if the Adventurers went near those places.

Rather, Adventurers could earn money in those places in the form of requests, or in other words, it could "create jobs" for them. Adventurers could even aim to be employed by the Palace.

"Ah, so the proposal of hiring Adventurers was passed quite easily."

"If only it hadn't been Greg who proposed that."

Meaning, he had tried to rip people off for free at first.

With a "Sheesh", Alfred shrugged at my words.

"On the other hand, Adventurers have pride as well. Fernand, that was his name, correct? I think the group that was with him will keep their distance from Greg."

"I think so, as well, but Greg wants to make Fernand earn many great achievements for him, so he might dig into his own funds to do so."

...Has he really become careless about his reputation?

If there were Adventurers who had taken the proposal, then those guys might need to prepare themselves for any censure from other Adventurers. I thought that it would be quite difficult for him to continue his attempts to search for things or take people in.

"Well...talking about those guys disgusts me, so let's put that aside. I'm still making preparations for the Workshop. If there's something you desire, please don't hold back and tell me."

"...Umm."

After Alfred asked, I thought for a while and answered with this,

"How about an item that can cast a spell to reinforce the Lunar Worm dress?"

"When it comes to dresses... one would think that it was just something pretty meant for women. The material used for your coat is Lunar Worm thread, isn't it?"

"Yeah, I can enchant it with my own power, so it's fine."

In Grace's case, it was necessary for a third party to cast the reinforcement spell. I thought that if there was a way for the Enchantments to activate on their own, it would put me at ease.

"Understood. Let's try to create a brooch, then? Even though I've thought about various ways to...not only have I considered challenging myself to create such conventional items, I've also considered doing extensive research to make new things. It would really help me out if you tell me about the inconveniences you face whenever you go into the Labyrinth."

Hmm...as the saying goes, "Necessity is the mother of invention?"
Inconveniences are inconvenient.

"It would also be helpful if I could communicate with someone who was far away from me, like if ever we got lost or separated in the Labyrinth."

Although there were personal chat and email functions in the Menu Screen of BFO...they materialized through the System Support, which meant that there weren't any spells present that could do the same within the game.

"...Yeah. That'll certainly be handy. I'll think about it for a bit."

The better the Magic Stones, the more techniques could be engraved into them. In short, it was something akin to programming. The important factor to take note of was the amount of reduction in the effect of the technique upon being engraved into the stones. Since good quality Magic Stones were valuable, it would be quite expensive if those were made into luxury items, which was impractical for retail.

"Oh yeah, umm...I have thought of several methods to reduce the scale of the techniques."

Alfred blinked at me after I said that.

Chapter 60 – Knight Fernand

“...I’m sorry, could you explain that to me once more?”

Alfred’s gesture of placing his hand onto his forehead showed me that he was worried.

“Hmm. So basically,”

A small light glimmered steadily as I lit up a Spell on my fingertip. There were two kinds of signals —one that emitted light for a short period of time and another that lasted for a longer period.

“Although the Mana itself isn’t specifically for producing light and can also be used for sound, you can combine short and long flashes to create signals like this, and each corresponds to a letter. The sender will first need to input a letter through a tool that converts that into a signal, which will then be transmitted. The receiver will convert that signal into letters and display it.”

In other words, this communication method was similar to Morse Code. It appeared that the scale of the technique could be reduced, since it was simple.

He had me go out of my way to explain the process of converting letters into signals, so that a wide range of people who didn’t have the necessary background knowledge or ability could use it. The Magic Circuit that was used for transmitting and receiving the signals, as well as displaying the translated letters, could be independent of each other. There was no need to make it into an all-in-one package, but further optimizations could be expected to make that happen.

“Later on, you will need to think of ways to identify the receiver.”

“About that... I think that creating a magical bond between two people through a Contract Spell or an Enchantment could work. That way, I’ll be able to cast Spells onto the completed tools.”

Alfred crossed his arms as if he was thinking about something and cast his eyes downwards in response.

Contract Spells were magic that bound a familiar or a slave to its master. If this method could be used to identify communication partners, perhaps he could apply his own ideas on the process later, as long as he could bear with it. Alfred would be the only one working hard on this, so I would have felt guilty if I kept throwing ideas at him.

Even though I gave that suggestion, I wasn't confident about how useful it was. He was, at least, determined, despite his common sense and the fact that he was behind schedule. Looking at the products that resulted from this world's Magic System, there were items that were impossible to make on Earth.

Besides that, although there weren't any created solely for long-range communication... if high level Familiars or Summoning Magic were utilized, it would be possible to transfer information back-and-forth between the two users.

A high level Familiar had to be prepared first, and it was necessary for the owner to form a contract with it. Since information transfer that relied on Summoning Magic required large-scale accommodations, special catalysts, and other similar things, there were higher hurdles to jump over. One of the drawbacks to this technique was that, since accidents could occur at even the slightest mistake, it required skilled Summoners to perform it.

As a common means of exchanging information, it appeared that people resorted to using outdated methods such as letters, signal fires, carrier pigeons, transfers that relied on dragon cages, and so on. Would this method be exceptional?

"Well...I was surprised."

Alfred, who had been looking downward, widened his eyes and looked up. His expression and tone were filled with pure amazement and curiosity.

"In order to handle the Mana, it gets treated as a simple signal instead without relying on techniques that could do various things, huh? Besides, if we can get rid of the useless parts of the signaling method...then—"

As far as I could tell from Alfred's reaction, it seemed like it was quite useful to reduce the number of necessary techniques. Perhaps, it was because this world didn't have Morse Code signals.

“Theo-kun...where did you come up with such an idea?...”

“Hmm. Even if I said where it was from...”

Since I couldn't say that it was from Earth, I spoke evasively.

//

As a result from my discussions with Alfred, it had become our direction to develop a Mana Communicator. (TN: 魔力通信機)

Even though it couldn't be completed within a short amount of time, it appeared that he already understood the principles of the mechanism and could visualize its finished form. Alfred uttered enthusiastically, “I'll definitely have it implemented eventually, and make it into a primary product of the Brightwelt Workshop!”

If communication technology advanced in ease and speed, it would have a great impact on society, so it wasn't like I didn't understand his enthusiasm.

Even if Brightwelt Workshop's plans and strategies were decided, it didn't mean that it would affect my life at present. Today, as well, we would be going around Twilight Forest to do some leveling and earn some money.

Just as I was about to enter the Labyrinth, a search party led by Fernand, with Jasper and several other Adventurers, caught my eye.

I would understand if they were quarreling, but a part of me doubted my eyes when I saw them smiling amicably at each other.

“Hmmpf. Well then, we'll pass through these areas along the way, without stopping until we reach our destination.”

“Yeah. Let this Jasper handle it, now that we have Fernand-sama to rely on.”

...Jasper replied to Fernand with that. His manner of speech was quite polite, which was unthinkable in the past. Hmm. In the end, was it money that Jasper valued, above all else? Perhaps everything else was just secondary to him.

I didn't recognise the adventurers who were with Jasper. Perhaps, he had become alienated from his former group because of what had happened. He might've become defiant with that, and Mercedia would probably get quite angry if she knew about this.

“Oi, brat. Do ya have a complaint ‘bout somethin’?”

Jasper noticed me and glared at me.

“It doesn’t really matter.”

Jasper snorted as I shrugged my shoulders. Although I felt a bit listless, he hadn’t really committed a crime, and his business here had nothing to do with me. I didn’t feel like questioning him in detail.

“Ara~, are you guys acquaintances?”

“We aren’t really... acquaintances...”

Although Fernand showed some interest, Jasper sulked and turned away.

“Fumu...”

Fernand shrugged a bit as he walked to me.

“...Can I help you? Do you not know about the promise with Sir Chester?”

“Although I do know about it, I have nothing to do with that man’s promise.”

...Well said. If his backer was Greg, he should have understood what this meant. Even though the matter had been passed around to the point that everyone already knew about it, for him to ignore it and start a conversation with me was...

“Well, listen up. Just because my interests were in conflict with the Flying Dragon Unit’s, doesn’t mean that I will pick a fight with them. Instead, there’s a better matter to discuss. Even though I’m being vague about this, since I don’t know how much you know about the situation, if you provide information on what the Knights are looking for, they will buy it for a hefty price.”

Although he whispered that into my ear...I knew that I had knitted my brows unintentionally.

I didn’t know how he would interpret my expression, but Fernand didn’t care at all, and only laughed.

“Don’t be so pretentious. The Knights have been investigating your circumstances as well. You separated from your house, and you’re going into the Labyrinth since you’re worried about money, right? Perhaps the reward

from before wasn't enough, but to have you here right now, I think this situation isn't particularly bad for you."

...What kind of line of thinking did this guy have?

When the Adventurers were asked for a map, or to be guides in the Labyrinth, the request would probably be delivered under the umbrella of the Knight's authority... and after the situation change, it had become like this? Although Fernand had a prideful look on his face, he wasn't the kind to give out money.

"Well, please think it over. I'm aware that my choice of words were bad, but we're definitely planning to hire Adventurers."

Fernand parted ways with me after saying what he wanted to say. Then, together with Jasper, they headed towards the stone stele and vanished into the Labyrinth.

Well, aside from his outward appearance, his inner workings were quite different from Chester.

...Even if he had spoken boastfully earlier, he probably intended to twist around some words with ill-will. I didn't want it to become an endless and pointless argument.

"If it was me, I would never want to be business partners with him."

Sheila spoke.

Although Fernand had intended to speak with just me in a whisper, it appeared that Sheila had heard.

Since she belonged to the Thieves Guild, it seemed that she really neither liked Fernand's speech pattern nor his attitude.

"Needless to say, I'm not interested in it at all."

At my response, Sheila smiled and nodded.

"What was that conversation about?"

Irmhild asked Sheila. She looked at me in question, wondering whether it was fine to talk about it, and I nodded at her. Whether or not she was worthy of my trust, part of me thought that information should be reliably shared with companions.

But, well, that was that.

Although I thought that business and personal feelings should be kept separate, when it came to human emotions, I had decided that it was better to deal with people when I was in a good mood.

To begin with, I was a companion who skipped over the Knights and gave information directly to King Melvin or Prince Albert. There was absolutely no merit to being partners with that guy and negotiating with him. Rather, along with Jasper, he was someone who I didn't want to get involved with.

...Hah. I decided to go into the Labyrinth. Rather than thinking about people like Fernand, it was always more productive to fight some Monsters instead.

Chapter 61 – The Labyrinth Girl

“...Someone’s fighting. It seems like a rather tough battle.”

At present, our party has been exploring the Twilight Forest with the goal of leveling up.

After we descended into the Labyrinth like usual, we searched the forest for a while. Sheila reported that news with her hands on her ears and her eyes closed.

“Which way?”

“It’s that way, shall I lead the way?”

“Please do.”

We ran on a trail in the forest, following closely behind Sheila, fast enough to avoid being separated. Even though there was no question about saving other parties while we were in the Labyrinth, it would be much worse if it resulted in a double accident.

(TN: double accident = both parties suffering equal damage)

The fight wasn’t too far away.

However, it wasn’t a party of adventurers, but a scouting group of knights.

“Damn! What the hell is this unpleasant voice!”

“Sh-....Shit! I’m getting dizzy...”

“Hang in there you guys! Open your eyes!”

Mercedia, the female knight I had met yesterday, was calling out to her collapsed companions. Brandishing her blade, she rushed towards several Killer Plants alone.

There were broken lanterns rolling around at the feet of some soldiers, who were entwined within the tree roots.

Mercedia was fighting several Killer Plants by herself, but she was suppressing them with ease even though she was outnumbered. While confronting the plants before her, she used her blade to send blade auras at the Killer Plants that were trying to go near her collapsed companions.

Have the collapsed soldiers been put to sleep by a Whispermush's spell? Although the return gate had been opened after the red dimension stone had been activated... unfortunately, they were unconscious and unable to retreat. ...Hmm. She was clearly trapped by the Twilight Forest. I was glad that the situation had not yet become very grave. However, I couldn't afford to ease up now. The bushes within the forest shook—a sign that meant more Killer Plants were coming.

"I'll go."

Without hesitating, Grace headed towards the Killer Plants that were approaching Mercedia from the bushes and dealt with them.

"Ashley should head towards the guys who are sleeping. Sheila will go help Mercedia. Irm will support both of you." (TN: Irm is a nickname for Irmhild)

"Understood!"

"Roger."

"Please leave the rear to me."

After I gave the instructions, the girls immediately went into action. Perhaps I should kill the Mushrooms that were casting sleep spells from the bushes?

There was no point in putting us to sleep if we woke up instantly. After being revealed by a fireball that I had thrown into the bushes, the group of Whispermush started to catch fire and went into a panic.

One of the burning Whispermush headed towards Ashley, who had gone to rescue the soldiers but...it was blown back by her long mace. As if to say 'Don't come here', the burning Mushroom was swatted at by tree roots and rallied through the forest. It was quite an unusual scene.

"—We're saved."

"Geez, what would've happened if you guys hadn't come by?"

Mercedia let out a big sigh.

If the soldiers had woken up from their slumber when we had saved them, they would no longer be outnumbered.

As we were taking a breather after wiping out the Killer Plants, Mercedia and the soldiers thanked us.

After speaking with them, it appeared that the Fairy Light, the thing that they had been using to illuminate the area, had been knocked away. The soldiers fell into confusion and ignited a lantern.

Meaning... they had created a disturbance when they were entangled by the tree roots, causing the Killer Plants to gather around them.

After that, they didn't know how to counter the Killer Plants, and the group of Whispermush successfully cast a sleeping spell on them. Since they were unable to resist the spell, their numbers slowly dwindled as more of them fell asleep. Well, like the first time, the way they were trapped seemed to be quite typical.

“The more Fairy Lights you have, the better.”

It was a relief that I had spares in my storage bag from earlier.

“I sincerely apologize. I’m grateful for your advice.”

Mercedia took off her helmet and nodded seriously.

It seemed that her helmet’s visor was damaged, limiting her vision.

“Are you the one in charge of the Twilight Forest, Mercedia-san?”

“Yes, our assignment was to train in this forest...”

“...Captain Mercedia.”

“What is it?”

One of the soldiers timidly gave their suggestion.

“Didn’t we decide that it’ll be fine to hire Adventurers? Is it impossible to cooperate with these guys?”

“That would be... difficult.”

“Why?”

“We recently had a dispute with some Adventurers, right? We can’t just say, ‘You were a nuisance last time, but please come with us because we need you this time.’ I think we should retreat for now, and continue training on an earlier level. In the meantime, I will investigate this forest area.”

...Wherever Fernand was, I wanted him to hear her words.

“...Understood.”

It seemed that the soldiers also agreed with her.

“However, have you collected Dimension Stones from this forest?”

“... That’s right, but we ended up using a Red one earlier, though..”

Although Mercedia had her eyes closed for a bit, she finally turned towards me and bowed.

“Theodore-dono, I’m aware that this is really shameless of us but could you accompany us until we go back? This will be an official request, and we will give you a proper compensation afterwards.”

Not ‘investigation’, but until they ‘return’, huh?

I wouldn’t say that I wanted to sell a Red Dimension Stone within the labyrinth, but she was right.

She had changed her mind because in a situation like this where morale was at its lowest, she had decided to turn back. She had chosen her duty as their Captain over her own pride.

After everyone shot glances at each other and exchanged their opinions, the girls nodded.

Well, come to think of it, it was an act of mercy.

“Understood, I’ll accept it.”

From what I had seen in the way that they had fought earlier... the soldiers’ fighting ability seemed to be pretty good. I wondered if they would have been able to make their way through the Twilight Forest if they hadn’t run into that situation.

In other words, what these guys needed was to gain more experience and a higher degree of familiarity in various areas of the Labyrinth.

Therefore, I had decided to advance onwards, while observing how they conducted themselves in the Twilight Forest during their practice.

Even if I called it ‘conduct,’ their level of risk in the Twilight Forest would lower greatly if they kept two things in mind—one was to cast a protective Spell against the Whispermush’s Sleep Magic, and the other was to properly use

Fairy Light.

Although it was fine to gather Fairy Lights to use as a source of light or to store for later, casting Healing Magic on them every now and then seemed to make them last longer or shine brighter. It was a bad idea to activate a flame spell, since, unlike the glow from the fairy light, it would easily wake up the sleeping Killer Plants.

After that, they should stick to the basics, like carefully evading monsters after discovering them, or finding easily-roused Killer Plants that mimicked non-motile plants and defeating them one by one with preemptive strikes.

“Hmm? Is something wrong?”

If Sheila thought it was an enemy, she certainly would have said so.

“Something’s there but... I don’t recognize it.”

She gave an unusually vague reply. Although I followed Sheila’s gaze, I could only see the intermittent glow of the scattered Fairy Lights throughout the dark forest.

“Around there?”

Irmhild pointed at a part of a bush, and Sheila nodded. I checked it out with Life Detection, and there was certainly something there. It was a small, bright reaction, like a warm-blooded animal. Its silhouette was—a young, human... girl?

A rustling noise came the bushes, and a face popped out. After dispersing the spell, my sight returned to normal... and was met with a pair of bright, golden eyes.

“A little...girl?”

“Why are you in such a place?”

It was a reasonable question from the soldiers. Speaking of child Adventurers, some did exist, including me... but to be alone in the Twilight Forest... it was unusual. Had she been separated from her friends? The girl simply stared at me before turning around and running away, continuing to rustle the bushes around her.

“Wha-Hey!”

“That’s dangerous! Get back here immediately!”

All the soldiers called out to her and jumped into the bushes to try and chase after the girl.

Well, certainly, they should protect the young adventurers who have been separated from their companions.

“That child just now, where have I—”

Irmhild muttered with a dumbfounded look.

Somehow... it seemed that I had no choice but to chase after her as well.

“Protection.”

It was a rank six Light Spell used for protection. Although it was only a thin veil of light, its defence rivaled that of metal armor. I weaved through the bushes as I went after the girl.

Soon after, I realized something unusual. She was running way too fast, and I couldn’t close the distance.

I considered going ahead by myself, but if we split up, it would be impossible to go on, due to the low level of visibility from the forest cover.

Eventually, we reached the outer edge of the Twilight Forest.

In other words, it was part of the outer wall of the Labyrinth, which concealed the outside from within the forest. There, hidden between the trees, was a closed door .

It was sealed, engraved with elliptical relief that overlapped on top of each other.

“W-what is this?”

“Hey, this is a lie right?”

As soon as the girl touched the door, she vanished to the other side, like water soaking through cloth.

I shot a glance at Irmhild. The girl who was always smiling cheerfully actually had her eyes popping out in astonishment.

“Irm, that child just now... do you know her?”

After asking her with a whisper, she shrugged her shoulders.

“I don’t really know. I feel like I’ve seen her from somewhere before, but maybe not.”

Irmhild’s vague memory contained nothing other than the time she had spent in the Labyrinth.

“A sealed door, huh?”

Should I say that it was discovered by accident? Or should I say that we were led here by a girl?

However, the design of its relief was quite different from what I knew.

According to Kagahisa’s rule of thumb, the relief would mean something.

Maybe I should accurately remember this.

As for committing the precise figures to memory, leaving it up to Caduceus sounded good to me.

Chapter 62 – Decoy and a Hostage

“I’m sorry for having you to accompany us until we head back.”

“No, rather, I’m glad that everyone is alright.”

We returned to the stone stele at the Labyrinth entrance.

Apart from Mercedia, everyone in the exploratory group was alright. I also realized that Irmhild was disturbed by this, so we withdrew for now. As I had thought, the door wouldn’t open even if one tried to push or pull it. In the first place, I didn’t even know how to open that door. I had also thought of striking it down and destroying it with advanced spells... but I didn’t know whether such an action would work in the first place, and even if I could destroy the door, I couldn’t do a careless thing like that while thinking about the girl on the other side.

“That happened ‘cause of all the trees swaying back and forth within that pitch black darkness. That was really tough.”

“I don’t wanna eat mushrooms for a while...”

The Soldiers sat down on the spot, and let out a sigh of relief.

“You guys. I’ll permit a break, but you’re in public, so don’t show a slovenly appearance.”

The Soldiers hurriedly straightened themselves after being mildly reprimanded by Mercedia.

...She seemed to have earned trust of the soldiers in the exploratory group. Since she suggested handing out her own pocket money to us as a request fee, the soldiers couldn’t hold up their heads.

The request was to accompany them until they returned, and the proposed reward was 100 Kilig. I thought it was exceptionally cheap for an escort request. Even if one said that this was too cheap or something, the deal was made inside the Labyrinth.

It wasn’t to my liking to deal with situations regarding other lives. However,

since working for free wasn't good, I settled for that price.

"I'm really sorry for this. I will definitely bring the payment tomorrow."

"You don't really have to rush it."

"You mustn't say such a thing. However, I must go report to the Palace today. I'll be sure to give credit to Theodore-dono as the one who discovered it."

We had both discovered the door at the same time though.

In the first place, finding the sealed door was just the beginning, and since there were various things beyond there from now onwards, I thought this was an empty achievement.

"If you're going to report, can you wait a bit longer?"

"...What for?"

"Might be better to save some time, right?"

I brought Mercedia, who looked slightly doubtful, with me to the Adventurer's Guild Lobby. Heather, who was seated on the other side of the counter like always, smiled and greeted us.

"Hello, Theodore-san, hello everyone."

"Hello, Heather-san. If you have some paper, I'd like to purchase a sheet."

"Paper, is it? Are you fine with any type of paper?"

"Yeah."

Heather, who inclined her head, brought out a bundle of paper from beneath the counter.

"I hope you're fine with some scraps used for notes. Obviously, I won't charge any money for something like this."

"That'll help me out. I'll be grateful if you can lend me some ink as well."

"Here you go."

After receiving the paper and ink from Heather, I went into the shade and let Caduceus take on a form which mirrored the Relief. I then smeared ink on the surface and pressed the paper down on him, as if I were stamping a seal. When

I turned it over, what remained looked similar to the pretty Relief on that door. I came out of the shade and handed the picture of the Relief to Mercedia, who had been waiting.

“For the time being, please hold onto this.”

“This is...”

After Mercedia received the paper, she bowed deeply, and then left the Guild.

“The Knights have their own difficulties as well, huh.”

Heather smiled wryly, then returned to her work of tidying up the documents placed in front of her. As for why she did not ask about the situation regarding Mercedia, she probably understood that the Knights did not wish to be investigated.

“So mysterious. If she is acquainted with me, the situation will surely grow right?”

Irmhild inclined her head while asking about the matter we had seen today after we had returned to the house and taken a short break.

“...But, I don’t think there has never been a child with that appearance.”

Since it was a denizen of the labyrinth, even if it looked like a human child... frankly, it could be anything.

“Either way, if she can run away like that, catching her would be difficult.”

“She didn’t feel like an enemy, though. Part of me is also saying, ‘what would you do after catching her?’”

“She isn’t necessarily an ally either.”

Since I didn’t know what goal they were trying to work towards in the first place, there was no point in reaching a conclusion. It seemed like she had tried to lead us towards that door.

“Either way, I have no choice but to put it on hold for today.”

Sheila said.

“Well...okay. Irm, are you alright?”

“Me? Yeah, I’m alright. From the start, I’m the type who doesn’t worry about things too much anyway.”

Irmhild said, wearing a smile like she always did.

“...Thank you, Theodore-kun.”

“I don’t think I have done anything to be thanked for though.”

“No. The clues have been increasing, and I believe I can move forward.”

She shook her head.

“That’s why, you don’t really need to be concerned about my matter.”

With that said, Irmhild took a sip of the tea that had been made by Grace.

“...Even so.”

Sheila, who had been listening from the side, opened her mouth.

“This house is refreshing, and feels nice. It would be troublesome to go out again after returning.”

I thought of what she said.

She had recently placed herself in front that ice pillar that was created in the middle of the tub.

Since Wind Magic was used to circulate the air inside of the rooms, if anyone approached the ice, they could cool down quite a bit.

“Do you two want to eat dinner together with us?”

Ashley, who was standing in the kitchen, asked.

“Hmm.... I have to make a payment at the Thieves Guild.”

Sheila’s ears drooped down with her words. Although her expression was the same as always, it was quite unfortunate. Well, Ashley’s cooking was also delicious.

She had to regularly make payments to the Thieves’ Guild, huh?

Although it wasn’t that great of an image in regards to making a payment to that Guild, in actuality, I felt that it was similar to a fee. The strict consequences of failing to make a payment on time and having a hard time withdrawing was a bottleneck for her.

Therefore, after Sheila and Irmhild spent some time in the house for a while, they returned to the Western District, since the day had grown dark and cold.

—However.

Just as the dinner preparations started, someone knocked on the door, and after checking it out, Sheila's group had returned.

“...What happened?”

I thought that they might've left something behind, but since the two of them had stiff expressions on their face, I invited the two of them in before asking about the situation.

“We are being followed.”

Sheila said that apologetically right as the door closed, but...

“I don't think you were particularly involved in this.”

“...Thank you.”

Since they seemed worried, I decided to say it clearly.

The hope that they could be friendly with me while showing ill intent towards Sheila and Irmhild was stupid.

Even if that were the case, if someone were to make a move on my companions, I would regard them as an enemy and take action. I thought that it would be okay to listen to the situation slowly, after I had made sure the threat was gone and reached a conclusion.

Therefore, it was good judgement for them to immediately return.

As for Sheila, it would be a difficult fight if someone temporarily interrupted her during the fight.

It wasn't really like Sheila or Irmhild didn't have the ability to fight. Looking at it from Sheila's view, she wouldn't want Irmhild to transform back into a Lamia in the town and avoid a scuffle.

“Caduceus.”

Caduceus, which had been lying down in its cat form, changed into its amorphous form and headed out the window.

After linking my vision with Caduceus, I examined the house's surrounding.

After that...oh, there surely was something.

A number of people had taken up position, one by one, at each corner of the house. Even though they would be spotted if they came from either direction from the street in front of our house, since the house had many shadows to hide in, they used that to their advantage and were waiting for us.

“What would you like to do?”

“Let’s have these two stay here for the night, since things are like this. I wonder if we should follow the guys back to their place when they give up and return, or when someone takes their place.”

Although I wanted to capture them with a swift attack and then interrogate them, it was possible that they would spread false information, and since it was only being tailed in the first place, I still couldn’t say that it was a crime. Being on the defensive for a countermeasure was a bit troublesome, though.

“How about I become a decoy?”

Sheila placed her hand on her chest and said that.

“A decoy, you say?”

“I’ll go out by myself, and observe their movements.”

“Sheila-chan, that’s dangerous, you know.”

“But, that way is faster. I’ll be able to tell whether they have business with me or with Irmhild.”

“If it’s like that, then I-”

Sheila shook her head at Irmhild.

“This type of thing is my specialty. Since you were unaware that we were being tailed, it’s impossible for you, Irmhild.”

After saying that, she shot a glance at me. I would consider looking into this. Regarding Sheila’s proposal...She certainly did have a point there. However, to put one of my companions in danger, hmm.

If she were to play the part of the decoy, I wanted to make sure of her safety.

“...I have a few conditions.”

If Sheila could accept these, then I would give her permission.

“...Don’t raise your voice. Come with me.”

A man said as he pressed an edged tool against Sheila’s back, who was crouching down.

The person who was shadowing her took action when they entered the Western District, where there were fewer pedestrians.

Sheila chose a road that didn’t have many people on it, and after looking around as if she had dropped something, she intentionally stopped moving. It seemed Sheila had probably only wanted to observe the other party’s reaction, but they saw the opportunity and came to try to kidnap her in one swift attack

...This setup was pretty fast. Although I could say it was hasty, could they be in a rush or something?

She obediently followed the man, with both of her hands raised in the air. The dagger worn around her waist was a cheap item. My condition for her was to accept that dagger in the beginning, and the dagger made with the Boar Fang was to be watched over by me.

Finally, a private house in the Western District appeared up ahead, on the path she was brought along on.

My figure was currently in the night sky. I was pursuing them from above, at an appropriate height.

Since I had put on black clothes, it would be next to impossible for them to discover me, even if they looked up.

Grace was in her Released Form, standing by at home. Ashley was fully armed, and Irmhild had dispelled her human form. We were prepared for battle at any time, in case they tried to storm into our house.

However, they probably thought that I was currently at home. Since the number of people who had tailed us wasn’t much, it was hard to think that they would employ force and oppose my base.

Since Sheila... was always ready to enter her defense posture and had Caduceus attach to her like clothes, that edged tool wouldn’t be able to cause a single wound to her.

...Although, I ended up seeing the shape of Sheila's body and more when Caduceus and I linked our senses together, so this strategy was troublesome for me. ...Let's not think about it too much.

Since she had entered the building, I closed my eyes and moved my senses to Caduceus. Sheila was brought along by the men, and they took her into the basement.

"We caught her."

"Heeh, that was unexpectedly quick. This will let us summon that brat."

The one who said that with a prideful smile...was Jasper. I see. In order to oppose me, she's a hostage, huh? I had a rough guess as to why they were in a hurry.

If they had plans for me, I had thought that they would confront me directly... but in this room, I got a clear understanding of the situation behind their break-in earlier.

First, as for the gang of criminals...there were several men that appeared to be Jasper's new Adventurer companions... It seemed Fernand wasn't there...but it did seem like there were other people bound to the chairs with rope.

The ones who were tied up were Mercedia and the exploratory group Soldiers. After that was...Hmm? Chester?

The other people aside, I wonder why they went as far as to capture Chester.

Chapter 63 – Gaining Control

Sheila tapped Caduceus with her tail as a signal. We had decided the signs for safety and danger in a hurry. Tapping it meant she was safe, while stroking it meant that she was in danger. Regardless of these things, I should probably extract more information before storming into the building.

Unable to resist, Sheila obediently got tied up in one of the chairs by Jasper's companions. As soon as they left, I made Caduceus cut the rope. Her appearance made it appear as if she was still tied up by the rope, and as long as the part that Caduceus had cut was kept down, it was a complete disguise.

“Do you intend to steal the credit for our achievements?”

After being questioned by Sheila, Jasper let out a prideful smile. Perhaps he became aware of his overwhelming superiority over her as he faced Sheila, who was tied up, and answered her with a look full of pride.

“Well, it can’t be helped, havin’ ta bring in that Knight-sama into dis nice place. I’ll get a lot of money, and dey say I’ll be promoted after dis job is done. I’m worn out from havin’ ta trap dat naive brat.”

...In other words, his plan of setting up achievements for Fernand seemed to be unchanged.

“Say, Jasper-san. What are you going to do with the girls we have captured?”

“We are waitin’ fer the preparation of the Slavery Spell. Just in case they end up runnin’ away. The whole thing will fall apart, right? Well, I suppose I’ll allow you guys to savor them till yer full.”

“That’ll be great. We will look forward to it!”

With that, the men laughed.

“...You goddamn low-lives.”

Although Chester spat that at them, Jasper sneered at him. An arrangement for a Slavery Spell, was it?

“Mercedia and Chester, how were you caught?”

Sheila shrugged her shoulders at the vulgar conversation between the men. As if ignoring the men, she asked that to the Knights who were next to her.

"It seems that Greg, who is the superior they report to, personally supported them."

"As for me...after I showed up at the Palace, I ended up passing by them carrying the unconscious Mercedia. While I was questioning them, I received a blow from behind by Lord Greg, who had arrived there."

Was he saying that Mercedia was drugged? With this intention, Greg was probably involved in this from the beginning. Maybe...the plan was to have Fernand come to the rescue after Mercedia went missing? They were probably thinking that, even though Mercedia's group had gotten completely wiped out in the Labyrinth, they had found the Door somehow. Since Chester...unintentionally ended up running into that area, he evaluated that he couldn't persuade them, and was completely cut down.

...I understood the gist of things.

This wasn't a situation with any extenuating circumstances. I would show them no mercy, since they had crossed the line. After sending a signal to act to Sheila, through Caduceus, she nodded.

Now then, shall we begin?

By manipulating my levitation, I plunged into a nosedive. Relying on the force of the descent, I knocked down a male guard using Ouroboros, and muted any sound with Wind Magic.

The guard, who took the heavy impact alone, couldn't even make any noise as he was buried into the earth.

After activating Life Detection, I walked into the private wooden house while searching for enemies.

There wasn't a single person on the first floor. After looking at the floor, it appeared that there were several reactions to Life Detection in the basement. I then checked it out with Caduceus's vision, and after completely grasping the enemy's position, I expanded a Magic Circle around my feet.

"Electro Lance."

Lightning pierced the floor and scorched one of the guys who was on the floor

below.

In a flash, I activate my next Spell. I got on top of stones that were created by Rock Breath. As I destroyed the ceiling, I knocked down a man who was directly below me. Together with the rocks, I descended into the basement.

“Huh—”

I cleared my vision by blowing away the cloud of dust with Wind Magic and glared into the room. Those guys faces could probably be described as speechless.

“T-this brat...!”

Although most of the men were taken by surprise and huddled together, one of them touched the sword that was on their waist. However, in the next moment, his face was caved in by a chunk of ice.

“Can’t you see that there are h-hostages—!?”

“Shut up.”

Just as he opened his mouth, I shot stone bullets at him. All of his teeth were shattered, and it sounded like his jawbone had broken. As large amounts of blood spilled from his mouth, he let out a soundless scream and tumbled onto the floor.

It looked like they had not figured out what was happening, but I had grasped their positions and range from all angles. Since I had deployed the enough Magic Circles and put them on standby, ready for activation, I could instantly strike anyone who tried to move.

“H-Hii!?”

Some tried to flee towards the door behind me. That’s right. I thought those guys would flee towards the nearest entrance after I had beaten up several of them. I aimed at a man’s back and activated a Spell.

“Trample Thorn.”

A Rank 5 Wood Magic, Trample Thorn. Thorny ivy sprouted from the Magic Circle, bound the man tightly, and started to strangle him. The man, who had his whole body caught by the thorns, screamed loudly from the intense pain. It

quickly imprisoned him in a sphere of thorns. The basement entrance was also closed off by this.

Four people remained, including Jasper.

"T-that bastard Jasper enticed me!"

The one who said that had happily laughed earlier, after listening to the way Jasper planned to deal with the captives.

Next next instant, lightning surged out of a expanded Magic Circle and struck him. White smoke rose from his body, and he collapsed. Three people remained.

"L-Look, you."

A flirtatious, soft voice came out. A spear of ice immediately shot towards that person, piercing them in the shoulder and pinning them to the wall. Two people remained.

Those two, who were frozen in place right now, remained silent as they listened to the agonizing voices around them.

"Sorry."

For the sake of the future, I decided to clarify their goal.

"I guess that will do for taking care of the group that took these hostages."

After I declared that, I shot rocks at the second man and hit him in the chest. He was sent flying, all the way to the wall, and only one person remained. Jasper.

I had a spell to restrict his power... so that he could just barely stay alive. I decided give him my stance on the various events that had happened today. As for the people who could talk here, Jasper alone was enough to explain the situation, since he was the most deeply involved here. He would surely be talkative with the way it was done.

"Now then."

As I stared at Jasper who was huddled nearby Sheila, his body trembled in surprise.

"Speak only after thinking about it carefully. How's Fernand? What about the

Twilight Forest?"

"...Y-Yeah. We gathered information from the Soldiers here after beating them up. Although they hesitated in the beginning, after we said that we would beat Mercedia, they spoke up."

...Mercedia's exploratory group soldiers, huh? The soldiers probably expected Jasper's group to finish Mercedia off scot-free and tried to protect her. Mercedia currently had her eyes shut, and looked like she was in pain.

"Fernand brought me along as a new companion, and we went into the Labyrinth. It still hadn't been long since I met these guys, so I couldn't rely on them for this work."

I see. Speaking of that, Jasper's new Adventurer group that I had seen previously...they didn't appear to be among the people here. Right now, I couldn't make a conclusion about how much those guys knew about this...but this meant that Jasper had gathered people who knew him well and made them help out, all just to create a nice memory.

However...these guys sure were reckless.

Looking at it from Greg's position, he was probably thinking about silencing the perpetrators who knew about the situation later on.

What he said about the arrangement of the Slavery Spell and such, was probably this. Since he could dispel Slavery Spells, it would be highly unlikely for him to keep any eyewitness alive.

He placed out bait before him, and he would destroy any evidence by killing both the perpetrators and hostages, leaving no one. Later on, he would bring the bodies into the Labyrinth and leave them there, saying that they died in the Labyrinth. This would finally close the case.

This would return him to power and get rid of me, who was an eyesore to him, killing two birds with one stone.

"Was Greg the one who gave you these orders? Does Fernand know about this matter?"

"...Yeah."

Jasper nodded with a sour expression after I asked that.

“Damn it! What naive brat...! Isn’t he a Monster!?”

The man who was pinned by the ice spear cursed at Jasper while crying out in pain.

The moment I shifted my gaze to him, Jasper, who was being vigilant against me, turned Sheila and reached out his hand. However, that was a wasted effort.

“Guggyaaaaah!?”

Jasper momentarily had a stupefied expression and yelled.

It was like he had thrust his hand into a pincushion. Caduceus, which had changed into several needles, attacked the hand that reached for Sheila. After sewing his hands together in the air, Caduceus became a spear and pierced Jasper’s knee. It then returned to protect Sheila.

As soon as that happened, the rope, which bound the hostages, was undone. Caduceus had secretly cut the rope, then lengthened its body to disguise itself as the rope.

Ever since the beginning, no matter what Jasper had tried to do, he had been in a checkmate.

Afterwards...these guys would be handed over to the Castle, and this matter would be settled if Fernand was arrested after returning from the Twilight Forest.

Chapter 64 – A Fool

“I said, let go of me! Do you have any idea who I am!”

Greg screamed at the soldiers from the Knight Tower as they dragged away everybody who was responsible for the incident.

They would be interrogated through a Magic Trial. Normally, those with a high enough social status wouldn’t be interrogated through magic, but these circumstances were somewhat... of an exception.

With trustworthy witnesses like Mercedia and Chester, things would turn out this way, even for criminals like Jasper. Greg would obviously also receive a trial of some form, as well as the people who were close to him.

I decided to go to the Castle by myself, as an involved party, and state my conditions, and Sheila agreed to return to the house.

As for me, only one person was needed for the job, and I could present some evidence to them.

“How did you get to the scene of the crime?”

“My companions noticed that they were being shadowed by Jasper’s group, so I decided to tail them.

“...Although you’re saying that like it’s natural...it is quite unfortunate for those guys.”

The expression of the soldier, who listened to my circumstances, twitched as he smiled.

For the time being, I had to tell them my own version of the events that transpired, but they treated me very differently than the way that they were handling Greg and his fellows.

If this were modern Japan, I would be asked about every single detail regarding this case, but thanks to the existence of Magic Trials, the interrogation would end quickly without spending too much time on unnecessary investigations. Well, I was grateful for it at a time like this.

“Understood. We’re already finished. I’ll guide you out of here, so would you please come with me?”

After asking several other simple questions, the soldier brought me to a room within the reception hall.

“I don’t think you will do anything rash, but please wait inside the castle for a while longer. If there is anything that you need, you can ask the servants for help.

“Understood.”

After I relayed my thanks, the soldier retreated from the room. After some time, Mercedia and Chester came into the room, as if to replace that Soldier.

“Ah, Theodore-dono, so you were here?”

“I’m glad that the two of you didn’t receive any injuries.”

“I deeply regret getting caught like that.”

Mercedia shook her head and let out a small laugh. Although they were ambushed, the fact that they became prisoners was a disgrace to them.

“Anyway, Theodore-dono is mine and my subordinates’ benefactor. Allow me to express my gratitude.”

“I would like to give you my thanks as well.”

With that, the two bowed.

“Since it coincided with my interests, you don’t need to be so formal.”

“You mustn’t say it like that.”

Mercedia smiled bitterly. Although Mercedia’s attitude and speech were light, I could tell that she was feeling quite down.

“I ended up causing you trouble, even though I promised myself to not get involved... Allow me to be excused. I have a lot of things to think about.”

With that, Chester left the room.

After seeing him off, Mercedia shrugged and looked at me.

“It seems like the way you fought had a big impact on him. I was surprised, too, you know.”

She said

As for “impact,” was she referring to how I took control of the situation? At the very least, what Chester had heard earlier was probably something that went directly against his policy. Compared to Mercedia, it was a bigger shock for Chester.

However, with the way I was, I considered myself to be an extreme case, so it would be troublesome to even think about standards too much. The duties required of Knights and Magicians were completely different.

“Although it was indeed severe... I do think it was the right thing, doing it like that. It also corresponded to the instructions we received from the Knight Captain previously.”

“Speaking of the Knights’ Captain, is he really that terrifying?”

“He isn’t as scary as you were during that time. Right now, though, you appear to be acting your age.”

I could only let out a vague laugh.

After talking to Mercedia about the Labyrinth for a while, I heard a voice coming from the corridor that said, “That guy returned!” Noise began to fill that corridor, and outside the window, too.

After looking at the Training Grounds from the window...what I saw was Fernand, who had come from the Labyrinth, walking around. He had a wide smile plastered on his face.

“To go so far as to come here... does this mean that he wasn’t captured?”

“Since there was a risk of him causing a commotion in town in order to get away, it appears that they have lured him into the palace in order to cut off all of his escape routes before arresting him... It seems he has truly incurred His Majesty’s wrath.”

Mercedia shot a glance towards the Tower. I followed her gaze and saw King Melvin on the balcony.

“Your Majesty, I am very humbled and grateful to be able to have an audience with you.”

After Fernand noticed King Melvin’s presence, his smile vanished. Perhaps he

had realized that this was a chance of reporting directly to the King, and so spoke in that manner.

“Oh, Sir Fernand. Did something interesting happen?”

King Melvin asked Fernand after receiving his retainer’s bow. While the corners of his mouth were raised, his eyes bore no hint of cheerfulness as he looked at Fernand. It appeared that the matter regarding Greg and Fernand had made the King quite angry.

“My liege, the information I have isn’t good.”

“Speak.”

“I met with a soldier in Miss Mercedia’s search party that had departed for the Labyrinth Search. He said that they were attacked by a swarm of Monsters in the Twilight Forest within the Labyrinth, and fled with the Dimension Stone.”

Right beside me, Mercedia, the person in question, closed her eyes and shook her head.

I watched as a look of incredulity filled her face.

Was this it? Was this part of King Melvin’s plan to enforce law and order? By giving an explanation in public, and displaying this disgraceful behavior, it seemed he wanted others to take heed of this as a warning.

“I headed into the Labyrinth with him in a hurry...However, we were too late, and they had already disappeared. Only pools of blood remained in the place he guided me to, and the search party lead by Miss Mercedia was nowhere to be found. I wandered around the Twilight Forest searching for any signs of them.”

Fernand placed his hand on his forehead as if he were feeling dizzy, and lamented quite melodramatically. Although he appeared to be quite the skilled actor...it was rather deplorable to watch.

“Although I spent quite a long time searching, in the end, I couldn’t find any sign of Miss Mercedia’s presence. The soldier, who guided me, was also killed by a Monster while we were searching, sadly... Thinking about his regrets constantly hurt my heart. Although, if possible, I wanted to conduct a search for her in the Twilight Forest with some very capable people, I returned with a compelling reason that awaits your decision.”

“...Hou, did you now? What is this reason?”

Although King Melvin’s voice was rather calm, if one listened attentively, it seemed as though his voice was slightly trembling in anger. Fernand, who found his way here, continued his performance without noticing this subtle detail.

“Yes. Although it was a tough decision, this Fernand rushed over quickly to the Palace to report this matter to Your Majesty first, since an important discovery was made. I’m also very worried about Miss Mercedia’s safety...”

Fernand said boastfully.

“The Royal Order has been accomplished. This lowly Fernand has come to report the matter that a Sealed Door was discovered in the Twilight Forest.”

“Hoho, you’re saying that you accomplished Our order?”

“Yes, sir. The door engraved with that Relief is without a doubt one of the Sealed Doors that we have been searching for. Although the fellow Adventurers that were with us tried to touch the door and open it...it appeared that their hands were burned.”

“Fumu. May we ask you something then? What kind of Relief did it have?”

King Melvin faced his adviser, and reached out his hand. At his gesture, the adviser respectfully presented a piece of paper.

“Yes. It was engraved, and looked like several elliptical shapes had overlapped one another.”

“Isn’t it, for example, just like this?”

King Melvin faced Fernand and handed him the paper that was in his hands. Fernand’s expression froze.

This paper had recently been created by me, after coming to the Palace. Although it was a replica made by Caduceus, it was pressed firmly in his hands. This was not to show evidence that the door have been discovered earlier...but the one that I handed to Mercedia was taken by Greg’s group, so I created a new one, since the old one was probably thrown away.

“Were you thinking that We didn’t know anything?”

King Melvin glared at Fernand, who froze in place.

“Mercedia, as well as Chester, have already returned to Us. We already know about Greg’s betrayal. Now then, Fernand, do you have any excuse for this?”

“Ah...eh? W-What?”

Fernand finally realized the fact that there were veins bulging out of King Melvin’s temple.

He restlessly surveyed his surroundings as if he was bored...then noticed that he was completely surrounded by armed soldiers. His face turned pale.

“It’s unnecessary to hold a Trial. Take him away. It doesn’t matter if you cut him down if he resists.”

Soon after King Melvin said that, he brandished his cloak and went back inside the building, as if he couldn’t stand looking at Fernand anymore. As if taking that as a signal, the soldiers moved altogether.

“U-Uooooh!”

I was a bit worried after the outcome had been decided, but after thinking about it, it turned into a peculiar situation for some reason. Fernand, who tried to find a way to escape, somehow fled towards the reception hall where I was, while avoiding the soldiers who brandished their swords at him. I unintentionally exchanged a glance with Mercedia.

Well, since there were several men positioned in this place and there wasn’t a lack of them, it would probably be the end of the line for him once he came into this building. His common sense vanished after being driven into a corner...

Credits

Translation: [Xant & Minions](#)

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